

U.N. general announces Bosnia ceasefire

BELGRADE (AP) — A U.N. general announced Friday that Bosnia Serbs had agreed to a ceasefire throughout the war-torn republic beginning Sunday. "We have agreed to a ceasefire Sunday at 12:00 all over Bosnia-Herzegovina," said Gen. Lars Eric Wahlgren, after emerging from more than five hours of meetings with the Bosnian-Serb commander, Gen. Ratko Mladic. The announcement came a day after Bosnia's president, Alija Izetbegovic, signed a U.N. peace plan for Bosnia, leaving the Serbs as the only holdout among the three factions fighting in the republic. It was unclear whether Bosnia's Croats and Muslims had been consulted about the ceasefire, and whether it would have any more success than dozens of other truces that failed almost immediately.

See story on page 8

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Emir of Qatar leaves hospital

DOHA (R) — The emir, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani, was released from hospital Friday and declared fit after examination for an unexplained ailment. The official Qatari News Agency (QNA) quoted a royal court statement saying he left the general hospital at 7 a.m. (0400 GMT) after general medical tests. "The results of the tests were good and reassuring," the statement said. The emir had been admitted to the hospital at Wednesday evening, when an announcement said he was to be subjected to tests. A flurry of telephone contacts from rulers of neighbouring countries was made to his son, Crown Prince Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani. The agency said he had reassured each about the emir's health. Sheikh Khalifa was born in 1930 and has been the ruler of Qatar since 1972.

Gulf ministers to discuss energy taxes

BAHRAIN (AP) — Foreign ministers of six oil-rich Arab states will meet next month to discuss U.S. and European moves to impose energy taxes, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) chief was quoted Friday as saying. Sheikh Fahem Sultan Al Qassimi, who has replaced Abdullah Bishara as the secretary of the alliance, said other topics on the agenda would include a discussion of whether Iraq is complying with Gulf war ceasefire demands. In an interview with the Emirates News Agency (WAM) of Abu Dhabi, monitored in Bahrain, he said the meeting of the six GCC ministers was set for April 4 in Riyadh. The proposed energy taxes, said Mr. Qassimi, would be discussed in light of a common policy issued by the council's oil ministers March 14 in which they declared their opposition to such levies. "The GCC member states are keen to protect their oil interests and to maintain the flow of their oil exports without impediments or tax restrictions that would affect the stability of the world oil market and the GCC plans to meet the world economy's oil needs," Mr. Qassimi said in the interview.

Hizbollah frees Israeli-backed gunman

BEIRUT (AP) — The Iranian-backed Hizbollah Friday released an Israeli-backed militiaman to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Beirut radio said. They said the bearded Elias Asmar, a South Lebanon Army (SLA) militiaman, was handed over to Pascal Keaton of the Red Cross at 2:30 (1330 GMT) near Hizbollah's headquarters in the ancient town of Baalbek. They said Keaton was to drive Asmar to the town of Jezzine, 70 kilometres southeast of Beirut where he would be turned over to SLA officials. A statement by Hizbollah earlier in the day said the release of Asmar was a goodwill gesture on the occasion of the 'Eid Al Fitr feast (see page 2).

Iran landslides kill five

NICOSIA (AP) — Landslides in Iran's southwestern Chaharmahal-and-Bakhtiari province have killed five people, Tehran Radio said Friday. The radio said the landslides, caused by heavy rains, left cracks 100 metres deep in the ground. The deaths occurred in the town of Arbal, 400 kilometres south of Tehran, in the past few days.

Turkish forces kill rebel Kurd, detain 82

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkish security forces killed a rebel Kurd and detained 82 others in military operations in seven provinces Friday, the Anatolia news agency reported. It quoted the emergency rule governor's office as saying that security forces killed a member of the separatist Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK) near the town of Lice, southeast Turkey, after he shot at a patrol. The office said 50 other PKK members were detained in raids in the provinces of Diyarbakir, Mardin, Sirnak, Bingol, and Siirt. Police also arrested 32 PKK members in the Mediterranean port city of Mersin, the provincial police chief said. More than 5,500 people have been killed since 1984.

Bid to impeach Yeltsin sputters in parliament

Beleaguered Russian president reshuffles cabinet

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Efforts to impeach Boris Yeltsin sputtered Friday and Russia's chief justice offered a compromise to end the power struggle by holding early elections and creating a new legislature.

Mr. Yeltsin, speaking to the Congress of People's Deputies on the first day of its emergency session in the Grand Kremlin Palace, reaffirmed his call for a nationwide referendum April 25 to decide who should rule Russia.

The Russian president, in a gesture of reconciliation, embraced some points of the compromise plan offered by Valery Zorkin, the chief justice of the constitutional court. Mr. Yeltsin also shuffled his cabinet and acknowledged making "mistakes" that hurt the economy.

Mr. Zorkin, in a 10-point proposal, called for simultaneous legislative and presidential elections in autumn and also suggested replacing the congress with a bicameral legislature.

Mr. Yeltsin said in his speech Friday that he could support some of Mr. Zorkin's proposals and said a referendum would be held.

The opening of the congress, Russia's highest parliamentary body, climaxed a week of tension between Mr. Yeltsin and the legislative branch.

Although hardliners have been calling for Mr. Yeltsin's impeachment, preliminary votes on other issues indicated they did not have the two-thirds majority needed to oust him for alleged violations of the constitution.

Hardliners acknowledged they had lost momentum.

"Despite the fact that Yeltsin deserves to be ousted, the most reasonable decision now would be to hold simultaneous early elections," said Viktor Aksyuchits, a leader of the deputies.

He said Mr. Yeltsin should resign or be ousted. The issue of impeachment did not come to a formal vote by Friday afternoon.

Many deputies were hostile towards the 62-year-old Russian president, laughing derisively when he said Russia relied too much on foreign aid, and when he blamed the central bank for fueling inflation.

Outside the Kremlin, several thousand Yeltsin critics and supporters staged rival rallies, separated by police barricades. "I want Yeltsin, the traitor of the motherland who sold his country to the West for hard currency, the drunkard, to get the death sentence for hurting Russia, which has suffered so much," yelled Ivan Alexeyev.

Under a sea of red, communist flags behind St. Basil's Cathedral, nationalist and communist protesters called on the congress to sweep aside Mr. Yeltsin.

"Deputy, deputy, this is your Stalingrad," they chanted in a reference to the battle which turned the tide of war against German troops in 1942.

Banners read "The motherland calls you" — a wartime recruiting slogan — and "Yeltsin is the enemy of the people, down with Yeltsin's occupying regime."

Mr. Yeltsin's main rival for power, Legislative Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, had urged the congress meet in emergency session after the president Saturday threatened to impose "special" rule to break the political deadlock blocking reform. Mr. Yeltsin later backed away from the threat and did not declare any kind of emergency rule in a decree published Wednesday.

"The 9th congress has gathered to make one and only one decision," he said.

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Israeli army destroys 9 Palestinian homes in Gaza

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israeli soldiers blew up nine buildings in a search for wanted Palestinian activists in the occupied Gaza Strip Friday, making at least 194 people homeless, Arab reports said.

The army confirmed that explosives had been used in an unsuccessful bid to root out wanted men in the Rafah refugee camp, but did not say how many houses had been destroyed.

The soldiers used anti-tank missiles to destroy the homes, the Arab reports said. One of the destroyed buildings alone housed 84 people, they said.

The army has acknowledged using the missiles since last November, saying it resulted in less casualties for soldiers and civilians than house-to-house searches for wanted men. The anti-tank missiles are only fired once troops are certain the buildings are cleared out, the army claims.

Palestinian negotiators at the U.S.-backed peace talks have said the use of the anti-tank missiles hinders the development of the talks.

One of the homes belonged to Ibrahim Hamdan Barbour, a member of the outlawed Hamas fundamentalist Islamic movement who was expelled by Israel with some 400 Palestinians to Lebanon last December.

The operation, which started before dawn and ended 12 hours later, took place a few hours after wanted Palestinians staged a defiant march through the camp, Israel Television said.

An army spokesman said that while the blasts failed to root out any of the wanted men, three people were arrested in connection with an arms cache uncovered in one of the homes, and for membership in Hamas.

Chief Palestinian delegate to Middle East peace talks Haidar Abdul Shafi said Thursday at a news conference that troops have



A mounted Israeli policeman watches a passing Palestinian woman and baby outside Jerusalem's Old City on Friday, the last day of the 'Eid Al Fitr (AFP photo)

damaged 95 houses in Gaza with missiles since December.

On Thursday Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian who stabbed and wounded a soldier in the Gaza Strip. At least 74 Palestinians and 12 Israelis have been killed since the Dec. 17 expulsion of Palestinians.

Officials said part of a nature reserve was burned out near the Dead Sea in a fire they believed was started by Palestinians.

Major voices concern over violence, page 2

Palestinian delegation ready for exiles' phased return

By Suleiman Al Khalidi Reuter

AMMAN — The chief Palestinian negotiator said Friday his team would return to Middle East peace talks if Israel promised to halt future expulsions of Palestinians.

Haidar Abdul Shafi also said the Palestinians would be more flexible in accepting a gradual return of Palestinians expelled to South Lebanon if Israel committed itself to such a pledge.

"An Israeli pledge not to resort to (expulsions) in the future is the main Palestinian demand and will be a positive indicator on which we can go back to the peace talks," Mr. Abdul Shafi, a leading Gaza doctor, told Reuters in an interview in Amman.

"Israel still refuses to give the pledge and this is a fundamental matter," he added. "If it continues to reject this, it will be difficult for us to return to the talks."

Arab-Israeli peace talks have been suspended since Israel's December expulsion of 415 Palestinian Muslims accused of links to Hamas anti-Israel violence.

Israel has angered Arabs and the Palestinians for refusing to implement U.N. Resolution 799 which demands their immediate repatriation. Under a deal worked out with the United States, however, it agreed to take back 101 expellees and let the rest return before the end of the year.

"In return (for such a pledge) we can be lenient on rescheduling the return of the (expellees) but in a time frame not exceeding next June," Dr. Abdul Shafi said.

His stand contrasts sharply with that of the exiles who say they will accept nothing less than their immediate return.

Dr. Abdul Shafi said the resumption of the 16-month-old talks hinged on the outcome of a

U.N. team seeks Iraqi assurances

BAHRAIN (AP) — A senior U.N. official said Friday Baghdad had apologized for a recent incident that found troops aiming anti-aircraft guns at a helicopter flying international weapons experts.

Nikita Smidovich, a member of the U.N. special commission that is overseeing the dismantling of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, spoke to reporters on the eve of his departure Saturday for Baghdad.

Mr. Smidovich will be accompanied by two other Russians, two Americans and a German who will set up a monitoring operation of military sites, which he refused to identify.

"We will remind them of their obligation of full respect for the U.N. rights," the Russian weapons expert said in Bahrain, regional headquarters of the U.N. special commission.

It was Mr. Smidovich's team that was threatened by the Iraqi anti-aircraft gunners in February. "Fortunately, there were no casualties on our side... we will mention it as specific example of Iraqi non-compliance, and of course they (have to) provide assurances it will not happen again," he said.

The incident, he said, was "taken very seriously by the commission and the Security Council." The Iraqis, he said, have "apologised and promised that it will never happen again."

It was not clear how the apology was made.

Mr. Smidovich said he would remind the Iraqis "that without full compliance with resolutions adopted by the Security Council, there's no way the council will come to an agreement to remove sanctions."

Iraq has been pressing for an end to the U.N. embargo, imposed in August 1990 after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

"The helicopter incident signifies there's still steps to be taken by Iraq" before the sanctions could be eased, Mr. Smidovich said.

He said Iraq still refuses to

Only one suspect still loose in New York bombing, FBI says

NEW YORK (AP) — Four of the five men arrested in the World Trade Centre bombing proclaimed their innocence Thursday, and, a month after the blast, federal investigators believe there may be only one suspect still loose.

"The circle is now very narrow," Jim Esposito, head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) New Jersey office, said after the fifth suspect was arrested early Thursday.

Authorities also disclosed that an explosives timing device like those in other bombings was recovered at the New Jersey home of suspect Nidal Ayyad, a chemical engineer who investigators believe has been making know how.

But at his court appearance, Mr. Ayyad insisted: "I am not guilty. I swear by all I hold dear — the Koran, my wife, child and mother — I had nothing to do with this."

The bombing a month ago Friday killed six, injured more than 1,000 and forced evacuation of the world's second tallest buildings.



Fatima Badra Ayyad, mother of Nidal Ayyad who is a suspect in the World Trade Centre bombing, and a man identified as Suhail, the uncle Mr. Ayyad, are mobbed by the media Thursday as they exit a Manhattan court (AFP photo)

Authorities say the motive remains unclear, though all five men arrested were born in the Middle East and at least four of them are believed to have links to a hardline Muslim cleric who advocates the overthrow of Egypt's secular government.

The arrest Thursday of Bilal Al Kaisi, 27, a Jordanian native living in Brooklyn, leaves only one known suspect still at large, said two federal investigators who spoke on condition of anonymity.

(Continued on page 5)

Netanyahu wins Likud leadership; Weizman is elected Israeli president

TEL AVIV (AP) — Beojamio Netanyahu, elected to lead the right-wing opposition Likud bloc, called Thursday for party unity to topple Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government.

"We will try through parliamentary and other methods to topple this government as soon as possible and go to new elections," Mr. Netanyahu told his followers at a victory rally in Tel Aviv.

Mr. Netanyahu, a former U.N. ambassador known for his suave style and flair for publicity, won a landslide victory in Likud primaries held Wednesday. The results were only announced Thursday.

He won 52.1 per cent of the vote in a four-way race, and takes over from retiring former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who led the Likud since 1983.

In his victory speech, Mr. Netanyahu, 43, said Mr. Rabin's government was too soft on a recent wave of Palestinian violence and too conciliatory on "territorial compromise" in the U.S.-sponsored peace talks with Arabs.



Benjamin Netanyahu waves to his supporters after his election victory Thursday (AFP photo)

Mr. Netanyahu's victory may boost Likud's chances of defeating Labour in the next elections in 1996. Israel Television immediately noted the age difference between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Rabin, who is 71, calling the Likud leader "Israel's Clinton."

Mr. Netanyahu told supporters that elections could be advanced before 1996.

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Exiles split again on faction lines

MARJ AL ZOHOOR, Lebanon (Agencies) — The nearly 400 Palestinians exiled by Israel marked their 100th day of banishment in southeast Lebanon by splitting anew Thursday, only three days after announcing the burial of their first open rift.

Sheikh Ahmad Shami, who leads about 35 exiles from the Islamic Jihad movement, told a news conference that exiles of the bigger Hamas organisation "are suppressing and muzzling us."

"We are deprived of our right to criticise the Egyptian regime and its crackdown on Muslim fundamentalist brethren because Hamas contends this will hurt our cause," Sheikh Shami said.

"I disagree, and I am going to keep attacking the Egyptian regime and (President) Hosni Mubarak, irrespective of what Abdul Aziz Rantisi thinks," said the pro-Iranian Shami.

Dr. Rantisi, a Gaza physician and a senior Hamas leader, has been acting as official spokesman for the expellees since their expulsion Dec. 17.

"We are not trying to muzzle others," Dr. Rantisi told reporters in response to Sheikh Shami's attack. "But we have agreed since our (expulsion) to refrain from getting embroiled in inter-Arab politics."

Sheikh Shami declined to answer a question as to whether he sympathises with Egyptian, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, whose Arab disciples in the United States are suspected of engineering the Feb. 26 bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York.

"What embarrasses me is the almost daily praise Rantisi heaps on Arab governments, and Egypt in particular. Why should we as (expellees) declare support for a regime that is persecuting our brothers in Islam?" Sheikh Shami said.

Islamic Jihad relies mainly on aid from Iran. Its exiles have been receiving assistance in their makeshift tent-camp from Hizbollah, the standard bearer of Iran's brand of Shiite Muslim fundamentalism.

Exiles from Hamas have been getting assistance mainly from the mainstream Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which is dominant in all Palestinian refugee camps in South Lebanon.

The exiles first split last week (Continued on page 5)

Expellees bloom in tent-camp, page 2

S. Africa got world help to make nuclear arms - activist

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The United States, Israel, Germany and France provided crucial assistance to South Africa's nuclear programme for decades, an arms control activist said Friday.

The statements contradict South African President F.W. de Klerk, who said Wednesday that South Africa's nuclear programme was entirely home-grown.

Six atomic bombs were built during the 1970s and 1980s, but they were dismantled in 1990, Mr. De Klerk said.

"What they are saying is only the tip of the iceberg," said the activist, Abdul Minty, who left his native South Africa in 1950 and now heads the Norwegian-based World Campaign Against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa.

Mr. Minty said Mr. De Klerk denied foreign assistance because he did not want to embarrass the Western nations that not only helped South Africa build the bomb but kept secret their knowledge of the programme.



F.W. de Klerk

Mr. Minty said the U.S. assistance dates to the 1950s, possibly earlier. A total of 155 U.S. scientists with nuclear expertise visited South Africa between 1957 and 1977, he said, while South Africa

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued on page 5)

Expellees bloom in snowy South Lebanon tent-camp

By Peter Smerdon
Reuters

MARJ AL ZOHOOR, Lebanon — Palestinians dumped by Israel into South Lebanon are blooming amid spring flowers after a 100 days in exile.

The 396 men see their survival and the problems the expulsion has caused Israel as revenge on the man who put them where they are: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"We didn't want to be heroes," says expellee leader Abdul Aziz Rantisi. "But the evil-doer Rabin brought it on himself."

Conditions have improved vastly from the night the men were banished and trapped northwards in a long line in freezing cold.

Their camp on a rock-strewn hillside between Israeli and Lebanese lines now boasts cellular telephones, televisions, generators, cars, donkeys, a medical centre.

Their health is better than before and there is no sign that the mule-loads of food, clothing and fuel smuggled to them over mountains by pro-Iranian guerrillas at night will run out.

A farmer near the camp has opened a shop for the exiles. The sun has warmed their faces and the daily chores of cooking and fetching supplies have built up their muscles.

Two men exiled with broken legs now walk without crutches and those who were overweight admit that excess pounds melted away in what at times appears to be a primitive health resort.

A few exiles have sneaked out to see friends in Lebanon and then returned.

Visitors range from Iranian Revolutionary Guards to foreign aid workers, all posing as journalists, officially the only people allowed to see the expellees.

The renewed ferocity of the anti-Israeli uprising in the Gaza Strip and West Bank and problems over resuming Middle East peace talks since the expulsions on Dec. 17 only make revenge sweeter.

"We feel the longer we stay here the worse the situation in Israel will become, internally and internationally," said Mr. Rantisi, who has taken to signing copies of the Koran and giving them to visitors.

The exiles have little else to believe in but themselves and Islam, whether or not they slip into international obscurity should the peace talks resume next month without their return.

Hardship nevertheless remains. They are bored with the food, the hills, their mindless daily strolls along a strip of road and the view of snow-capped Mount Hermon.

The fear the snakes and scorpions of summer, dread the possibility of late storms and grouch about having to fill tanks from mountain streams and hunt ever farther for firewood.

They miss homes, families and above all their children.

"Up until now it has been our victory," says Abdul Fatah Al Awaisi, 35 and a history professor at Hebron University.

"The supplies we have are more than we need. So our problem is no longer humanitarian, it is political," Dr. Awaisi says.

"But even if you bring me everything here, you can't bring me my family, my eight kids, my home. We are suffering in the hope that the next generation will have a better future."

Some exiles fear Israel may refuse to take all of them back when they end their maximum terms in exile next December. Mr. Rabin expelled them for

up to two years but in February cut the terms in a U.S. push to save the Arab-Israeli talks.

"We can't say this is a victory because we suffered for 100 days," says Omar Ferwana, the head of the medical team.

"But something happened that is positive not only for us but for the Palestinians and the whole Arab-Israeli problem."

"Four hundred men thrown out with nothing have succeeded in pressuring Israel and promoting international awareness about our humiliation. This has given the Palestinians new spirit."

Dr. Ferwana's eyes only fill with tears when he talks about his children in the Gaza Strip, which he can reach on the camp telephones. Journalists carry out letters from the expellees.

Asked whether he thinks that his two daughters and two boys know why he is staying in exile with others, Dr. Ferwana says they are too young to know except for his nine-year-old son Saleh.

"When I rang Saleh he just said: 'I love you' so I think he understands. The others only know that their dad, the biggest, best thing in their world, is gone and they want him back."

Single men say they are lucky to have no wives to worry about but are still obsessed with news from the occupied territories.

Nasser Homadah, a 29-year-old hotel worker who was expelled with his brother Jamal, says he was jailed nine times by the Israelis.

"But at least in jail you know that one day for sure you will get out," says Dr. Homadah, relentlessly pacing up and down the road near the camp. "Jail became normal for me. But after 100 days this still isn't normal," he says.



Palestinian expellees throw balloons written with messages congratulating their parents on the occasion of 'Eid Al Fitr' (AFP photo)

Egyptian militants parade coffin of leader

ASSIUT, Egypt (R) — Muslim militants turned the funeral of a slain leader nicknamed "harsh revenge" into a political demonstration, parading through a southern Egyptian town with his body in a coffin, witnesses said Friday.

Police fired shots into the air when the crowd massed in front of a police station but there were no clashes nor people hurt in the demonstration in Abu Tig Thursday.

The dead man, Abdul Rahman Mohammed, 25, was killed in a gunfight with police who raided his house at dawn.

The police said he was a leader in Al Gama'a Al Islamiya (Islamic Group), a militant movement led by a blind preacher in the United States whose followers there have been implicated in last month's bombing of the New York World Trade Centre.

About 300 militants roamed through Abu Tig in the early evening chanting anti-government slogans and carrying Mohammed's coffin, a witness said.

They shouted: "There is no God but God, Hosni Mubarak is the enemy of God" through loudspeakers and threw stones at shops.

Mohammed's burial went ahead and police avoided clashing with the militants but they later set up checkpoints in militant strongholds in the town to detain people suspected of being involved in the protest, security sources said.

The militants under pressure from a security crackdown which has killed 29 of them this month, staged two public protests in southern towns earlier this week calling for the overthrow of President Mubarak's government.

Leaflets by Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman calling for revolution, distributed by Islamic Group militants in southern strongholds, have now been discovered in the northern Nile Delta, the Cairo newspaper Al Gomhouriya reported Friday.

Police confiscated a printing press and 2,000 leaflets in eastern governorate and arrested a number of militants, the state-owned newspaper said. It gave no further details.

At least 116 people have been killed in political violence in the past year as militants attacked police, Christians and tourists and police hit back.

Major voices concern over killing of Palestinians

LONDON (AP) — Prime Minister John Major expressed his concern Thursday night over the killing of Palestinians by Israeli forces and warned of the growth of Islamic fundamentalism if the Mideast peace process fails.

In a speech at a dinner in London given by the board of deputies of British Jews. He said he knew the sort of "provocation" Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) are under in the occupied territories.

"Nobody is suggesting that they pursue a deliberate policy of violence," he said.

But he added: "I would be at fault if I did not express my deep concern about the IDF's actions in the occupied territories."

"The death of over 20 children and young people since December, in shooting incidents involving the IDF, grievously undermines the case of Israel's friends, as I know you will recognise."

Mr. Major said failure of the Middle East peace process would encourage the growth of Islamic fundamentalism.

"We must therefore get all the parties back to the negotiating table, and urge them to pursue agreement while the opportunity is there," he said.

He said there was a window of opportunity but it would not remain open indefinitely.

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He warned: "Failure would carry risks and consequences which no responsible leader would wish to entertain."

"Failure would accentuate economic problems. It would risk greater political instability and widespread social unrest. It would provide fertile ground for fundamentalism and extremism."

"Fundamentalism is a dark cloud the world should watch carefully. As well as extremist movements, certain governments not involved in the peace process would like to fail and to capitalise on failure to increase their influence in the region."

He did not name the governments.

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U.S. begins show of force in Somali port

MOGADISHU (R) — Low-flying U.S. fighter planes kicked off an American military push Friday to block any attempt by one of Somalia's leading warlords to seize the southern Somali port of Kismayu.

"The show of force has begun and the overhead flights by Harrier jets and helicopters started early this morning over Kismayu," Chief Warrant Officer Eric Carlson told Reuters.

A 4,200-strong U.S. amphibious troop force set off from Mogadishu for Kismayu by sea Thursday following reports that warlord Omar Jess planned an offensive against dominant Kismayu warlord, Mohammad Said Hersi, also known as General Morgan.

A quick reaction force consisting of 500 troops, which returned from Kismayu Monday, is also on standby to move back into the port.

Kismayu has seen some of the worst combat fighting since a U.S.-led 23-nation force arrived in December to quash banditry and looting of famine relief aid to millions of Somalis.

But spokesman Carlson said the port appeared to be quiet early Friday and that no major incidents had been reported.

He expected the military operation to begin to earnest early Saturday. "The amphibious force is doing hydrographic surveys today and the operation will probably start in real earnest tomorrow," he said.

Nine hundred Belgian troops based in Kismayu have stepped up roadblocks and checkpoints in the region as part of a drive to create a weapons-free zone.

Gen. Morgan's forces stormed Kismayu last month and drove out thousands of Jess followers. The U.S. military, denying it supported Gen. Morgan, ordered his gunmen out and later said he had complied.

U.S. aircraft dropped off 200,000 leaflets in the Kismayu region this week, warning that anyone found carrying weapons would be considered a serious threat to peace.

"Somalis must choose peaceful ways to resolve their differences. Those who use force will be dealt with appropriately," the leaflets said.

Fighting in Kismayu last month spilled over into Mogadishu and the U.S. military tightened up security in the capital Friday.

The show of force by U.S. and Belgian troops is seen by political analysts as an attempt to prevent further disruption of Somali national reconciliation talks still going on in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

The talks were suspended for several days last week after Gen. Morgan's forces, using women and children as human shields, launched an attack on Jess supporters.

The 15 factions represented at the Addis Ababa talks are said to be nearing agreement on a transitional authority for Somalia, which has been without a government since the 1991 overthrow of dictator Mohammed Siad Barre — Gen. Morgan's father-in-law.

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Kurds should define their goals, aspirations, scholars say

WASHINGTON (USA) — If the world's Kurdish population is to progress in its struggle for freedom, it must first define its priorities and present them clearly to prospective allies, according to political scientist Richard Falk of Princeton University.

The absence of a Kurdish state and the presence of large Kurdish populations in several countries in the Middle East and Europe have produced a situation both confusing and immensely complicated, said Dr. Falk, one of about two dozen experts who addressed the March 18-19 conference of the Badliyy Centre for Kurdish Studies in Washington.

"Outsiders are not really clear on what is meant by Kurdish self-determination," said Dr. Falk. Among Kurds themselves, he added, there is some confusion over what their overarching goals ought to be.

At the conference, for example, a number of scholars and activists spoke confidently of a future "Kurdistan" or even "Greater Kurdistan" that would, presumably, be carved out of one or more existing states. Others dismissed the notion of reconfigured maps, and concentrated on the human and civil rights needs of Kurds in various countries.

The fragmentation has its roots in the unusual history of the Kurds. In the pre-World War I, the mountainous region that they had inhabited for centuries was divided up among Syria, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and the former Soviet Union. With an

estimated population of 20 to 30 million people, the Kurds are often described as "the world's largest nation without a state."

The past 70 years of Kurdish history have been punctuated by promises of greater freedom, recognition, autonomy — and even statehood — that were never fulfilled. As a minority population in several countries, Kurds have suffered varying degrees of marginalisation and outright repression.

Some of the experts suggested that this past is responsible for the conflicting goals and ideals of various Kurdish groups. Despite the Kurds' distinct language and culture, the partition of their land came at a "critical juncture and resulted in separate national experiences," believes Charles McDonald of Florida International University. "There is no significant pan-Kurdish movement," he said.

"I think of the Kurdish struggle as a series of distinct movements, each connected to a different state," Dr. Falk said.

At the same time, Dr. Falk told the conference participants that currently fluid ideas about self-determination might be conducive to a more unified movement, and perhaps the eventual creation of an independent Kurdish state.

He pointed out that the end of the cold war saw the rapid recognition of new states in the Balkans, the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere. Given Western sympathy for the plight of the Kurds, especially in Iraq — those prece-

dents could be used to validate an independence movement, Dr. Falk said.

But he underlined that self-determination is an ambiguous concept, and that the Kurds themselves have not fixed on a definition.

"It is overwhelmingly up to the Kurds themselves to clear up this ambiguity and state their claims clearly to the rest of the world," Dr. Falk said.

One of the more sensitive issues discussed during the conference dealt with the very notion of changed maps. For the most part, speakers of Kurdish origin supported that possibility — with one notable exception. Dr. Barham Salih, a representative of the Kurdish parliament in northern Iraq, reaffirmed that his group is committed maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity.

Iraqi Kurds, he said, have a clear and unifying vision, and it is "that the future should be different from the past." To that end, they have used their protected status in northern Iraq to develop an open, democratic system within the borders of Iraq.

Nicolas Normand, a political officer at the French embassy in Washington, stressed that while his government is strongly supportive of the experiment in northern Iraq, it believes that the possibility of creating a Kurdish state is "unrealistic."

Among other factors, Turkey is extremely unlikely to accept an independent Kurdish state next door.

Khamenei renews attack on Mideast peace process

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has renewed Iran's denunciation of the Middle East peace process, saying it will prove detrimental to the Palestinians, the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported Thursday.

Ayatollah Khamenei was addressing worshippers Wednesday in Mashhad, northeast Iran.

The peace talks, support for Palestinians and rejection of perceived Western hegemony were the main themes during holiday sermons around Iran.

"Darker days" await Israel, Ayatollah Khamenei said of the escalating Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. IRNA said thousands of people responded with shouts of "Allahu Akbar."

Palestinian resistance "will not always be with stoics," he warned, according to the IRNA, monitored in Nicaragua.

Iran is an open supporter of Palestinian Muslim fundamentalists who reject the peace process and insist on fighting Israel until an Islamic republic emerges in its place.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which supports the peace talks, says Tehran's backing was helping the extremists gain influence in the occupied territories at the expense of the pro-PLO moderates.

The peace process, begun in

1991, is "one hundred per cent detrimental to the Palestinian nation," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

It "means the Palestinians have no right to their homes and homeland anymore."

He said: "Arab states may have yielded to the talks under pressures

King celebrates 'Eid Al Fitr at Hashemieh Mosque

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Life in the private and public sectors will go back to normal in Jordan Saturday following the five-day 'Eid Al Fitr holiday which ended the holy month of Ramadan.

The feast was celebrated by religious ceremonies in mosques around the country on the first day of the 'Eid Wednesday.

The main celebration, attended by His Majesty King Hussein and Royal Family members, was held at Al Hashemieh Mosque, and the sermon focused on the significance of the feast.

Secretary General of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Ahmad Helayel paid tribute to the King for his dedication to restoring Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and his continued drive to safeguard the holy places in the occupied lands.

Deputy Premier and Education Minister Thougat Al Hindawi, the speakers of both Houses of Parliament, senior government officials and high ranking army officers were among worshippers attending the ceremony with His Majesty.

Following the prayers, the King visited the tombs of King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein and King Talal Ben Abdullah.

His Majesty also laid a wreath at the tomb of Queen Alia.

King Hussein received well-wishers at Raghadan Palace on the occasion of the 'Eid.

The King also exchanged cables of good wishes with heads of Arab and Muslim nations.

His Majesty King Hussein Wednesday attends 'Eid Al Fitr services at Al Hashemieh Mosque. The King is accompanied here by Their Royal Highnesses Princesses Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, Faisal Ben Al Hussein, Ali Ben Al Hussein and Ghazi Ben



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EC group to visit Amman, and hold discussions on resuming peace negotiations

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A four-member delegation from the European Community (EC) is due in Amman by the end of March to discuss the Arab-Israeli peace talks with Jordanian leaders, according to Renato Batti, head of the EC delegation in Amman.

Mr. Batti told the Jordan Times Friday that the foreign ministers of Britain, Denmark and Belgium, as well as Hans Van Den Broek of the EC Council will visit Amman, Damascus and Beirut before going to Israel.

The aim of their visits is to hold discussions to promote the peace process.

The EC delegation members will also hold talks with the Palestinian side to the peace talks and will declare their support for the U.S.-Russian-sponsored peace negotiations, said Mr. Batti.

Reuters said.

Dr. Abdul Shafi, who arrived here Friday on his way to Damascus to take part in the meetings of Arab countries involved in the peace talks, told Reuters the Palestinians wanted the EC to play a more active role in Middle East peace process by prodding Israel to drop its hardline stand in the talks.

"The European position is still below what we hope," he said. "It is still a position that is content with declarations." Dr. Abdul Shafi added, "We want the European position to translate itself to practical measures that will commit Israel to revoke its intransigent positions (in the peace talks)."

Mr. Batti said, at present, there is some hesitation regarding the peace process because of the dispute over the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 799, which calls for the repatriation of the Palestinians expelled by Israel to southern Lebanon more than three months ago.

It is hoped that the delegation's talks in the Arab states and in Israel will urge the concerned parties to resume the negotiations by April 20 in Washington and find solutions to the Arab-Israeli problems, Mr. Batti added.

Asked whether the delegation will be discussing economic matters or EC aid to Jordan, Mr.

Batti said the tour is strictly dedicated to the peace process and means to help the two sides resume their negotiations next month.

Mr. Batti noted that the delegation's visit will come close on the heels of the Arab foreign ministers meeting in Damascus to discuss a concerted Arab stand vis-a-vis the resumption of the peace talks and the current talks between a Palestinian delegation and the U.S. administration.

Mr. Batti's statement came in the wake of an official announcement in Brussels about the EC delegation's tour of the region which stated that talks with the Arabs and the Israelis could remove the Arab hesitation to go to Washington to resume the negotiations.

A Palestinian delegation Thursday left for Washington at the invitation of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Heading the delegation is Faisal Husseini, who was quoted as saying that the talks with the U.S. administration will aim at overcoming obstacles still impeding the resumption of the peace talks.

Mr. Husseini is accompanied by official Spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation to the Arab-Israeli peace talks Hanan Ashrawi, and delegates Ghassan Khatib, Nabil Rassis and Zahera Kamal.

Regional energy minister to sign link-up agreements

By Elia Nasrallah

AMMAN — Energy ministers from Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Egypt are scheduled to meet in Amman in June to sign final cooperation agreements in energy-related fields.

Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA) Director General Mohammad Arafah told the Jordan Times Friday that a technical committee representing the five countries will convene in Amman in May to prepare for the June ministerial meeting.

The ministers are expected to endorse the committee's decisions and sign two agreements for power trading and interconnection projects which would be implemented by 1986, Mr. Arafah said.

Ministers from the five countries last met in Damascus in October 1992 and initially approved the ambitious plan to link their electricity networks.

According to Mr. Arafah, the three-day ministerial meetings should result in approval of the Egyptian-Jordanian interconnection project of \$200 million, the Jordanian-Syrian project of \$150 million and the Syrian-Turkish project of \$250 million.

No figures were yet released on the cost of Iraq's linkage with the group, Mr. Arafah said. He added that the projects are of vital importance to the five countries.

Mr. Arafah said the Kuwait-based Arab Islamic Development Bank have promised to extend loans to the concerned governments in order to help them implement these projects.

He said that KAFESD's Director General Abdul Latif Al Hamad had promised to sign agreements for the loans once the ministers of the five governments had finalized their own agreements and signed them.

Following the Damascus meeting in October, the Syrian minister of electricity, Kamel Al Baba, was quoted as saying that the differences in climate and consequent differences in power consumption would allow the countries with surplus to supply others.

Mr. Baba said that as a second stage, the Arab countries would be linked to European grids through Turkey and that Maghreb Arab countries would be linked with the original five states via Egypt.

Other African states could also join the network, Mr. Baba said.

Asked about the cost to be shouldered by Jordan, Mr. Arafah said that Jordan and Egypt are already involved in an interlinkage project and Jordan has acquired a \$35 million loan from the Arab Fund to carry out its share.

But no exact figures were available for the cost of the Jordanian-Syrian part of the project, Mr. Arafah said. He added, that the major part of the Syrian-Jordanian interlinkage will be in Syrian territory.



Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday visits with children at Jordan's SOS villages in Amman and Aqaba on the first day of 'Eid Al Fitr (Petra photo)

Queen visits SOS villages on 'Eid

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday visited the Jordanian SOS Children's Villages in Amman and Aqaba and took part in celebrating the first day of the 'Eid Al Fitr feast, marking the end of Ramadan.

Queen Noor, who was accompanied on the two visits by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Hashem, Prince Hashem, Princess Iman, and Princess Raya, in addition to Director of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) In'am Al Mufti, distributed presents to children staying at the two villages.

The Aqaba village, established in 1991, is considered an extension of the children's SOS villages in Jordan and is basically financed through grants offered by the Hermann-Gmeiner Fund and the Industrial Development Bank, as well as assistance extended from abroad.

The village currently houses 27 children, and can accommodate 72 children.

The Amman village was established in 1986 through support from Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor to help orphaned children.



Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday visits with children at Jordan's SOS villages in Amman and Aqaba on the first day of 'Eid Al Fitr (Petra photo)

Despite high female enrollment at some educational stages, expanded efforts are needed to upgrade women's standing

AMMAN (J.T.) — Secretary General of the Ministry of Education Munther Al Masri said 95.9 of female students in the age group 6-16 years were enrolled in all educational stages at schools in the Kingdom last year, against 92.6 per cent of male students of the same age group, but women's literacy is more than double that of men.

In paper presented at a recent seminar on women's issues and education, under the chairmanship of Her Royal Highness Princess Basma, Dr. Masri said the percentage of girls below school age registered at kindergartens was 18.5 per cent while boys accounted for 20.5 per cent.

In the secondary stages, Dr. Masri said, 66 per cent of females older than 16 years were registered at schools, while the same percentage for males was 65.6.

Dr. Masri said despite all breakthroughs in girls' education in Jordan, there were still some obstacles that ought to be removed, particularly those facing rural girls.

Some of these obstacles, Dr. Masri maintained, are social, related to norms and traditions; and some are psychological, dealing with the way women view themselves and their role in the society.

Other factors, he added, are economic, such as poverty, unemployment and the low income of some families.

Dr. Masri admitted that some of the impediments facing girls' education pertain to the lack of educational facilities in certain areas of the Kingdom, coupled with the absence of counselling and guidance services.

All these obstacles contribute to raising the percentage of girl dropouts from schools and their early marriages, he said.

On vocational education, Dr. Masri said a total of 8,600 girls were enrolled in various vocational schools around the Kingdom, compared to 16,400 male students at similar schools.

He pointed out that there is a large difference between the number of girls and boys studying at vocational schools, where girls constitute a third of the total number of students enrolled in this branch of education.

He said girls' enrollment in vocational training is predominantly in the nursing, household economy and commerce streams with few studying.

In his working paper, Dr. Masri also said that the total number of girls studying at community colleges reached 57 per cent of the total number of students at these colleges, pointing out that the numbers of female students is high in educational and academic specialisations and low in vocational branches.

He said the total number of girls graduating from Jordanian universities last year was 46 per cent of the total number of graduates, which he described as high compared to international figures.

In the post-graduate stage, the number of female students drops to 20 per cent of the total number of students at this level, he said.

This factor has its effects on the number of females teaching at community colleges and universities, as well as those working in scientific research fields, Dr. Masri said. He said the number of females teaching at Jordanian universities stands at 14 per cent of the total number, and at community colleges it rises to 25 per cent.

Concerning the illiteracy problem among females, Dr. Masri said it remains a sizeable problem.

In 1992, he said, the percentage of illiteracy among females stood at 25 per cent, compared to 12 per cent for males.

Dr. Masri said, in 1979, illiteracy rates among women were 50 per cent, pointing out that the concerned authorities' efforts in eradicating illiteracy should be doubled, and that rules making education mandatory at the basic educational level are followed by parents.

He added that expanded efforts are needed to support the Ministry of Education policies which aim to reduce the current illiteracy rate from 18 per cent in 1992 to 8 per cent by the year 2000; and for girls from 25 per cent to 10 per cent.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

★ Exhibition entitled the Memory of Silk, displaying traditional Jordanian and Palestinian costumes, shawls, carpets, pottery, copperware, from the Widad Kawar collection. — at the French Cultural Centre.

THEATRE

★ Play entitled "The Death of Thebes" at the Royal Cultural Centre's main theatre at 8 p.m.

S. Africa

(Continued from page 1)

sent 90 scientists to America during the same period.

Also, the U.S. manufacturing firm Alice Chalmers sold South Africa its first nuclear reactor, which became operational in 1967, Mr. Minty said.

Mr. De Klerk's admissions came about largely because of pressure by the U.S. government, said Mr. Minty, who gave a news conference at the headquarters of the African National Congress (ANC), the leading black opposition group.

The ANC has praised U.S. president Bill Clinton's administration, saying it demanded such a public disclosure from South Africa when Foreign Minister P. W. Botha visited Washington recently.

"Why didn't the U.S. put pressure on South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s?" asked Mr. Minty.

He suggested that U.S. officials, along with the De Klerk government, have become increasingly nervous about the prospect of a left-leaning black government getting its hands on nuclear weapons.

Mr. De Klerk says he wants a multi-racial election next year, and the ANC is the overwhelming favourite. The ANC favours making Africa a nuclear-free zone, but its allies include such U.S. foes as Libya and Cuba.

The United States could have forced South Africa's hand much sooner, Mr. Minty said. U.S.

satellites detected a flash, thought to be a nuclear test, off the country's southern coast in 1979, but the information was not made public until it was leaked out much later.

South Africa says it never tested its nuclear weapons. But Mr. Minty said the country was collaborating with Israel during the 1979 test as part of a long-standing nuclear exchange.

Most media accounts have said mineral-rich South Africa provided the enriched uranium while Israel helped provide technology.

Mr. Minty also said South Africa received substantial aid from Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s, mostly through the exchange of scientists. He said Waldo Stumpf, the current head of South Africa's Atomic Energy Corporation, worked with the Germans during this period.

The French, meanwhile, helped build South Africa's nuclear power plant at Koeberg, in the western Cape province.

"It is laughable for Mr. De Klerk to state that South Africa developed its nuclear weapons capability without outside help," said Roger Jardine, who handles technological affairs for the ANC.

South Africa's past secrecy and refusal to submit to international inspections have raised suspicions the country could still hold weapons-grade fuel or possibly even weapons.

Various reports have estimated that South Africa developed as much as 300 kilograms of enriched uranium.

Rock'n roll on campus

AMMAN (J.T.) — The rock'n roll duo of Billy Stevens and Scott Ainslie will perform on Jordanian university campuses in Amman and Ma'tali between March 28-31.

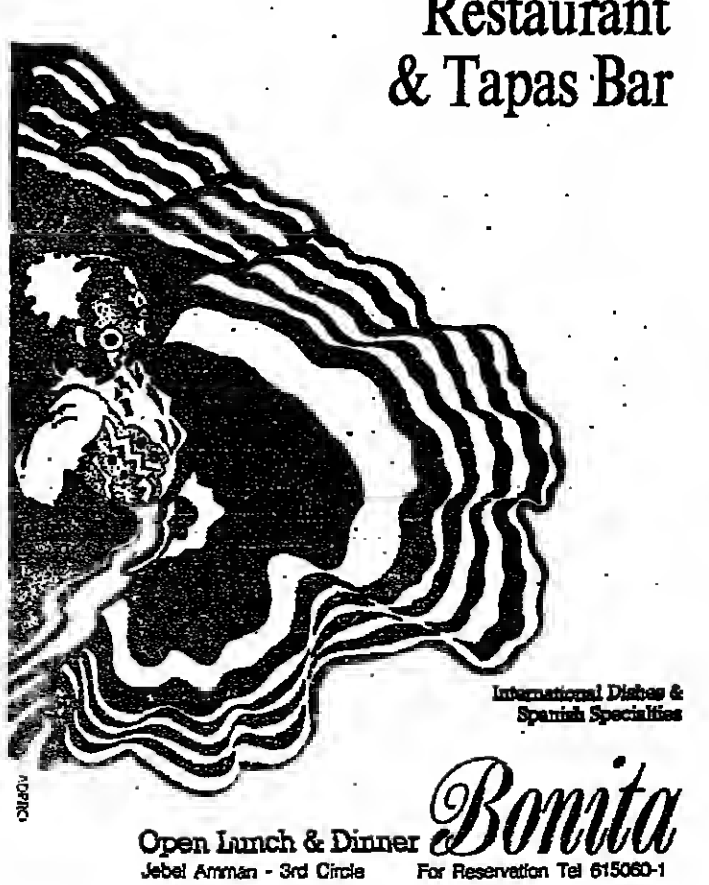
Hosted by the University of Jordan, Royal Jordanian (RJ) and the American Cultural Centre in Amman, the two-man band will entertain young Jordanian audiences with a varied repertoire of rock'n roll and blues music.

The first performance will take place Sunday at 4 p.m. in the Prince Hassan Ben Talal Auditorium at the University of Jordan.



Billy Stevens Scott Ainslie

Restaurant & Tapas Bar



Open Lunch & Dinner Jebel Amman - 3rd Circle For Reservation Tel 615080-1

AVIS A TOUS LES CITYOYENS CANADIENS RESIDANT EN JORDANIE

LA SECTION CONSULAIRE DE L'AMBASSADE DU CANADA A RECEMMENT ENVOYE UNE LETTRE A TOUS (TE) LES CANADIEN(NE)S EN JORDANIE QUI SONT ACTUELLEMENT INSCRIT(E)S DANS NOTRE REGISTRE A L'AMBASSADE. SI VOUS N'AVEZ PAS RECU UNE TELLE LETTRE, VOUS ET VOTRE FAMILLE N'ETES PAS INSCRITS A L'AMBASSADE.

NOUS PRIONS TOUT CANADIEN RESIDANT EN JORDANIE QUI N'A PAS RECU UNE TELLE LETTRE DE CONTACTER L'AMBASSADE DU CANADA, SECTION CONSULAIRE, SHMEISANI, AMMAN, SOIT EN PERSONNE, SOIT PAR ECRIT (CP 815403, AMMAN) POUR VOUS INSCRIRE DES QUE POSSIBLE.

Attention all Canadian citizens residing in Jordan

The consular section of the Canadian Embassy in Amman has recently sent letters to all Canadians in Jordan who are currently registered with the embassy.

If you have not received such a letter, you and your family are not registered with the embassy.

All Canadians residing in Jordan who did not receive such a letter are urged to contact the Canadian Embassy, Consular Section, Shmeisani, Amman either personally or in writing (P.O. Box 815403, Amman) to register at your earliest convenience.

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Jordan Times advertising department.

Period for reflection

TOMORROW'S SESSION of the Lower House could be the 11th Parliament's last. An extraordinary session seems to be off the cards since neither the government nor the deputies seem to be interested in holding one. Indications then are that the country will have a new government soon that would be entrusted with holding elections for the 12th Parliament which would subsequently convene sometime in the fall. That would leave the political scene almost dry apart from the electioneering campaign which will not be short of slogans and bickering. In essence this means that the rest of this year will be written off in terms of producing any legislation that would add to democratic progress. The incoming government whether it is the incumbent one, with a major reshuffle, or a totally new government, will have very little to worry about, save for the biting rhetoric of some candidates.

One major accomplishment that has eluded the 11th Parliament and our democratisation process as a whole is the fact that a great deal of time has been wasted in making new legislation and not enough days and session allotted to doing other parliamentary business. The days in which Parliament does business have been very few and they were usually occupied by meaningless correspondence with the government, mostly over petty issues.

We would hope then that the 12th Parliament would devote more of its time to reforming the ways and methods by which the two estates of state function and interact. Furthermore the country — like the whole region which is passing through a delicate process of change — needs an all-encompassing vision of the direction and methods by which to lead it through the difficult times towards a stable and prosperous future. The post-1989 governments have basically achieved two major objectives: Containing Parliament and the economic crisis. Parliament, however, has achieved probably only one thing, namely the abolishing of martial laws. All the other strides that Jordan has made in its quest for democracy are those of His Majesty the King. In fact the King's vision for a new Jordan seems to be way ahead of the both government's and Parliament's reach.

Despite the long time that separates us from the 12th Parliament, we sincerely hope that the upcoming Chamber of Deputies would have more sober leaders with clear vision and very little "ministerial" ambitions who place the future and well-being of Jordan above their own.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

INSTEAD OF considering measures to reach peace with the Arabs and the Palestinians their right to end the cycle of violence in the occupied Arab lands, the Israeli government has resorted to further repressive measures that are bound to escalate tension, said Al Dustour Arabic daily. The recent spate of killings of both sides has no doubt caused the Israeli society to become more worried; and the continued confrontation between troops and the Palestinian resistance forces has become an obsession for the two sides, the paper said. However, instead of defusing the situation and deal reasonably with the violence, the Israeli government chose to step up repression against the intifada in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip through further demolition of homes and killing of young Palestinian activists, said the daily. Despite the Israeli arrogance and the policy of terror, and despite the arming of Israeli citizens to attack the Arab population, we are confident that such policies and crimes will not last for a long time, especially because the Palestinians are determined to pursue the fight and the Arab population are determined to achieve freedom, the paper continued. It said that Israel is living a real crisis because it continues to face the intifada against occupation, and the Israeli leaders realise that, sooner or later, they will have to consider the option of peace based on justice so that the Israeli society can live in security alongside the Arab people of Palestine and the Arab World surrounding the Jewish state.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily commented on Eid Al Fitr feast, which coincided with a new upsurge of violence in the occupied Arab lands. The feast comes once again this year while the wounds of the victims of the occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are still bleeding, said Salah Jarar. The writer said the feast comes once again to see the Arab people of Palestine involved in fierce fighting against the occupation forces and the people in a state of grief over their fallen martyrs in the occupied Arab territories, where the Israeli force have been causing suffering to the innocent population. On the other side of the Arab World, we continue to witness American forces besieging the Iraqi population and causing more sufferings for the Iraqi women and children during the feast and throughout the past three years, the writer said. He said that the feast used to bring with it gifts and toys to the children of Palestine and Iraq, but this year, and due to the Israeli occupation and the American aggression, innocent children continue to face the bullets and the shells of the aggressors. For a quarter of a century now, the Palestinians have been facing acts of terrorism and the crimes of the Israeli forces and settlers; and for the past three years, the Iraqis have been exposed to aggression on all sides, he added. The writer said this long dark tunnel must have an end, and the offerings of the Palestinians and the Iraqis ought to end so that the children can once again rejoice over their gifts and the joyful occasion.

By Naseer Aruri

THE PLIGHT of the 396 Palestinians stranded in Lebanon since Dec. 17, 1992 is slowly being removed from the international agenda. The range of discourse on the subject was between those who viewed the expulsion as a pre-emptive measure designed to prevent further attacks by Islamic activists on Israeli soldiers, and others who saw it as a form of retaliation and/or a show of force by the Rabin government to appease the Israeli Public.

In either case, the assumption is that there is an underlying threat — "terrorism" to be sure, but a special kind, bearing the new label of Islamic fundamentalism. Such a "threat" will continue to provide the ideological framework for Israeli retaliation and intervention. The syndrome is firmly entrenched in the political culture and the two dominant blocs — Likud and Labour — usually try to outdo each other in meeting the challenge.

Responding to criticism by right-wing members of the Knesset, and aware of public opinion polls showing that 78 per cent of Israelis supported the expulsion, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin boasted on Feb. 8, to a BBC correspondent:

We knew we were making an unprecedented move. Which government in the past 20 years was prepared to expel or remove temporarily 25, not to mention 400 people? I felt at the time a need to level an immediate, tough blow against Hamas that went beyond everything done previously. I achieved that aim, whether it involved 300 or 400.

Such boasting hardly masks the siege mentality which Mr. Rabin himself had asked Israelis to shed upon assuming office last July: "We must overcome the sense of isolation that has held us in its thrall for almost a half century," he said. It also reflects a grotesque sense of proportionality, whereby 400 Palestinians are summarily ejected to a makeshift mountain camp in the middle of winter in retaliation for the killing of four Israeli soldiers. Worse yet is the fact that in the six months since Mr. Rabin became prime minister, the death toll among Palestinians killed by Israelis is on the increase. According to the Israeli human rights organisation B'tselem, security forces shot dead 76 Palestinians between August 1992 and January 1993. In contrast to 63 dead during the first six months of 1992. During the same period the number of Palestinian children killed soared from six to 17.

Applying Mr. Rabin's criteria for retaliation and/or pre-emption, one could speculate about the number of expellees required to placate Israeli public opinion — 40,000 or perhaps 400,000 — had these death statistics during Mr. Rabin's latest tenure been Israeli not Palestinian. Or one could also speculate, as did the Houston Chronicle on Feb. 7, about the world's reaction to a similar atrocity committed against Israelis by Palestinians.

"What would have happened if the Palestinians had held 415 Israelis hostage for over a month in a cold and barren no man's land with nothing but tents to shelter in? What would Israel have done if the Palestinians had held their hostages over holidays

and said they would not be allowed to go home unless they agreed to end their occupation of Arab land? What would those in human rights circles have done from Washington to London — if not one of these hostages had been given any sort of trial before being deported from their land and dumped in the cold? What would the press have said if they were submitted to intermittent showers of snow and artillery?

The demographic battle

That 1,600 Palestinian natives can be quickly rounded up and in a few hours 413 of them are blindfolded, handcuffed and bused to the Lebanese border, without charge, trial or any semblance of due process, is ominous enough. But the act itself represents a new dimension for Israel's expulsion policy and is intended to set a precedent in Israel's demographic battle with the Palestinians.

Unlike the mass expulsions of 1948 and 1967, which took place under the cover of armed conflict, and unlike those of 1989-90, which were executed bureaucratically on the pretext of improper residency. The December 1992 expulsion is the first mass expulsion to be carried out explicitly in the name of security. Dec. 16, 1992, Prime Minister Rabin, who also holds the defence ministry portfolio, issued authorisation No. 97 granting military commanders in the occupied territories the authority to expel inciters. Almost simultaneously was set up with the issuance of Military Order 1086, and the expulsion was carried out in accordance with the instant legislation.

This "legalisation" has amended a previous rule, which allowed those subject to expulsion orders the right of appeal to

a military committee and then the Supreme Court. In fact such appeals never succeed: The Israeli Supreme Court has never overturned an expulsion order.

Surely Yitzhak Rabin, a veteran of expulsions, having "removed" some 55,000 residents of Ramleh and Jaffa in 1948 (a small portion of the 800,000 Palestinians who became refugees) and having served as the army chief of staff in 1967 when about 300,000 were "removed" to Jordan, is seeking new horizons in the policy of acquiring more land and less people. This would be congruent with his latest diplomatic offer in the stalled "peace process," which envisions a division of the occupied land into three sectors — Palestinian, Israeli, and one to be negotiated. If he is able to expel 400 and get away with it, then what is to prevent him from expelling larger numbers the next time?

The cumulative impact of such expulsions on the political future of the Palestinians would be devastating. The 413 who were expelled last December include a high number of career professionals, businessmen and students. In addition, the thousands of Palestinians who were expelled since 1967 represent a high percentage of qualified people. An escalation of this mass expulsion for security reasons, as Mr. Rabin threatens, could deprive the Palestinians of a large number of their future administrators, engineers, scientists and even negotiators.

Hoodwinking the Americans

The damage is likely to be further compounded by American acceptance of Mr. Rabin's latest acts. In fact Mr. Rabin wasted no time in claiming a



The implications of U.S. support for Israel

major victory when he struck a deal with the Clinton administration on Feb. 1. According to the "encomium," Washington agreed to shield Israel from imminent sanctions in the Security Council in exchange for Israel's agreement to allow 101 of the deportees to return immediately while keeping the other 295 in exile for one year.

After Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced the agreement, saying that Israel's move should end U.N. involvement in the issue and promising that the U.S. "will prevent any decisions in international forums that would have operational significance against Israel," Mr. Rabin described the agreement as a "package deal" and asserted that it preserved "the principle of our ability to remove for a limited time hundreds of inciters, leaders and organisers." Although the Clinton administration did not cherish being characterised as an accomplice by Mr. Rabin, no U.S. official has disavowed the attribution.

Worse yet from Washington's standpoint are Mr. Rabin's leaked boasting that he was able to hoodwink the Americans. According to Agence France Presse (Feb. 7) Mr. Rabin boasted: "I've made a great deal with the Americans." When asked about the Palestinians' rejection of the deal, he was reported to have said: "It's no longer my problem... No it's Clinton's problem. He can stew in his own juices. I wanted a deal with the Americans and I've got one... the reaction of the expelled Palestinians does not interest me, it never has."

It remains to be seen whether the Arab parties to the Middle East negotiations will fall in line and "get on with the business," as both Israeli and U.S. officials have predicted, or stand firm on

the legal and humanitarian issue. If they can be drawn to the negotiations by U.S.-Israeli machinations, the whatever credibility they have left among both constituents and protagonists will most likely dissipate even as rapidly as the negotiations' chances of success under the Madrid formula.

Israel has a vested interest in the negotiations, whose framework is supplied and designed in such a way as to exclude a full restoration of occupied territories and Palestinian national rights. Israel also has a vested interest in assuring control of the demographic balance in historic Palestine, the crux of the matter. For Israel, establishing the right to carry out mass expulsions for security reasons, in addition to expulsions in time of armed conflict and expulsions conducted bureaucratically on an ongoing basis, will serve to enhance its demographic objective.

This brings us back to the core issue in the current controversy over the expulsions. Demography, like land and water, is at the heart of the Palestine-Israel conflict. The fact the Palestinians, who constituted more than two thirds of the population of mandated Palestine on the eve of Israel's creation in 1948, now constitute around 40 per cent, despite a birth rate of more than double that of Israelis, is in itself a manifestation of a cardinal principle of Zionism to acquire the land without the people.

U.S. complicity in an illegal act

The Israeli strategy of enlisting U.S. support for that principle is of course well known. But having succeeded in getting the Clinton administration to effectively acquiesce in a new dimension of

Israel's expulsion policy is unprecedented. This is not to imply that the Reagan and Bush administrations have been promoters of peace and justice, but they did adhere to the principle that expulsion from occupied territories was illegal. The U.S. departure from this principle, which the Rabin-Chenon "compromise" of Feb. 1 implies, explains the Israeli prime minister's glee.

While the first action on the Middle East by the Clinton administration reveals a tangible tilt towards Israel, the surprising thing is the extent to which the administration has already deviated from the standard U.S. position on expulsion from occupied territories.

No less important is the departure from international law, which has been touted repeatedly in the conflict with Iraq. During the past year, the U.S. government had at least two occasions to express its position on this question. Voting in favour of Security Council Resolution 726 on Jan. 6, 1992, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Thomas Pickering said:

"The U.S. government believes that deportation of individuals from the occupied territories is a violation of Article 49 of the Geneva Convention... Any persons charged with wrongdoing should be brought before a court of law based on the evidence and be given a fair trial, which would afford a full judicial process."

As late as Dec. 18 1992, then Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger reaffirmed the U.S. position, which considered expulsions a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Article 49 prohibits absolutely "individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations... regardless of their motive." Deportations are also a form of collective punishment which is expressly prohibited by Article 33 and are specifically cited as a "grave breach" or a war crime punishable under the Convention in Article 147. Moreover, Article 146 places specific duties on states party to the convention to suppress grave breaches by prosecuting the perpetrators. The latter requirement is significant in the light of the U.S.-Israeli "compromise" of Feb. 1, which makes the U.S. as a party to the convention, an accomplice in an illegal act.

Contrary to the claim made by Mr. Christopher that the Israeli offer to repatriate 101 out of 400 Palestinians is "consistent with Resolution 799," that repatriation in fact made no exceptions or exemptions. The resolution did not establish new categories of permissible expulsions, partial expulsions, or temporary expulsions, as absurdly implied in that process, which in Mr. Christopher's view made it "unnecessary for the matter to come before the Security Council for further action."

It demanded the "immediate repatriation" of all the expellees. The prohibition of deportation in international law is categorical. Therefore, the departure of the Clinton administration from the requirements of international law as well as from longstanding U.S. policy amounts to rewarding Israel for carrying out an illegal act. So much for the U.S. as the guardian of international legality.

Middle East International

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Ending the silence about the expellees

Reviewed by Ella Nasrallah

THE LOCAL press last week gave prominence to the upcoming meeting in Damascus by foreign ministers of Arab countries involved in the peace process, the situation in the occupied Arab lands and domestic affairs.

A columnist in Sawt Al Shaab warned the Arab parties not to remain passive vis-a-vis Israel's expulsion of about 400 Palestinians to southern Lebanon.

Keeping silent about the expellees and accepting a resumption of the negotiations before the Palestinians' repatriation means that the Arabs and the Palestinians accept Israel's present inhuman policies and its drive to evacuate the Arabs from their homeland, warned Salah Elkur. The writer said that the meeting in Damascus later this month should discuss a resumption of the peace process in the light of the developments of the expellees and ought to take a unified stand insisting that U.N. Security Council Resolution 799 be implemented in full.

The Arabs are convinced that Syria will not conclude a separate peace treaty with Israel over the occupied Golan Heights because Damascus realises that the Egyptian-Israeli treaty achieved nothing for the Arabs and fell short of fulfilling the Palestinian people's aspirations, said

Mahmoud Rimawi in Al Ra'i. The writer said that Israel and the United States have been seeking a separate solution with Syria, promising Damascus huge amounts of aid coming from Washington, Europe and the Gulf. He said that Damascus is right to hold on to a comprehensive peace on all fronts since separate deals achieve nothing concrete for the Arabs.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily warned Palestinians not to rely on promises given by the U.S. administration concerning the repatriation of the expellees or the end of the occupation of Palestinian land. Tareq Masruch said that there is nothing that can change Washington's biased stand towards Israel, which recently received \$10 billion in guarantees to build its settlements in Palestinian lands. The writer said that the Palestinians have only their own intifada to rely on because resistance is the only card they can play in the face of occupation and in dealing with the conspiracies being hatched against them.

Sawt Al Shaab daily said that Israel has displayed its hostility towards peace in every way. The current escalation of repression against the Palestinians is a clear indication of Israel's total rejection of Arab demands for the recognition of the Palestinian people's rights in their homeland,

said the paper.

Salah Al Qallab, a columnist in Al Dustour, said that Israel's contemplation of withdrawing from the Gaza Strip resulted from the pressure caused by the intifada. He said contrary to the claims that such withdrawal can cause disturbances in the Gaza Strip, it would mark the beginning of the total withdrawal from all the Arab territories although such move can be achieved in degrees. "We are sure that no civil war will erupt in Gaza or the occupied West Bank should the Israelis withdraw from any part of the occupied lands," said the writer.

Sawt Al Shaab daily turned its attention to Iraq and said that during the Holy Month of Ramadan, the Arab and Islamic countries ought to have terminated the sanctions on the Iraqi people and saved them untold sufferings. The paper said that while the United States is ordering Turkey to reduce the flow of the Euphrates River to Iraq in order to deprive its people of food and means to irrigate their land, the U.S.-led coalition, backed by Arab and Islamic states, continue to impose unjust siege on the Iraqi people, causing thousands to die.

Taber Al Udwan also discussed Iraq and said that the U.S. administration is trying to find pretexts to extend the present sanctions on Iraq. U.S. Secret-

ary of State Warren Christopher visited the Arab region in order not to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict but rather to ensure continued Arab backing for the sanctions on the Iraqi people. The writer said that while the Iraqis are steadfast in the face of the conspiracies, those Arab states plotting against Baghdad will soon find themselves facing the danger of instability and insecurity and will face total collapse.

Abdul Rahim Omar said that the Socialist President of France Francois Mitterrand has faced defeat in the elections due to his policies in general and failure to live up to the aspirations of the French people. The writer said that in the Gulf war Mr. Mitterrand forced France to fight an American war and to defend American interests in the Gulf but he failed to secure for France any fruits of such policy. Furthermore, he said, France, under the Socialists, has lost its European role in world affairs and lost its credibility in the Arab World.

Arafat Hijazi in Sawt Al Shaab turned his attention to Islamic fundamentalism and said that the worshippers during Ramadan and the hundreds of thousands of Muslims praying at the holy sites in Jerusalem on Fridays show that the Muslims are not terrorists but rather pious people

determined to protect their holy places and ready to die in the fight against the aggressors. The writer said while the Zionists and the Americans continue to claim that the Muslims are terrorists, the Muslim people, whether fundamentalists or not, are determined to show that they fear nothing in their drive to protect Al Aqsa Mosque and will fight the enemy by all means.

The questions of Islamists and their activities in the Arab World was discussed by Mona Shuqair in Al Dustour.

It is widely believed that Iran is behind the spread of the Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab World, especially in Sudan, Algeria and Egypt. It could be that Iran continues to provide help to the Islamists but such support and financial aid can by no means create a whole political current that is now sweeping the three countries and causing deep changes in social life, the writer said.

"What we have to realise is that the drastic political, social and cultural changes should not be equated with terrorism because they are reactions to developments in the region and to injustice," said the writer. Islamic fundamentalism, she added, is a manifestation of a rejection of plots and plans that contradict with the Arab history and Arab national interests, and it is a demonstra-

tion of rejection of the continued suffering and an opposition to the so-called new world order which entails terrorism for the Arab World.

Hamadeh Faraaneh, a columnist in Al Dustour expressed support for the Islamic Action Front's rejection of all forms of terrorism as voiced by the party's Secretary General Ishag Al Farhan. He said that the front calls on the Arab governments to stop its acts of terrorism against the people and to opt for democracy and dialogue to settle the political disputes, said the writer. He said that such ideas can serve as a common denominator for all the political parties in Jordan because they all support such ideas and they all renounce terrorism but support the continued struggle against the Zionists and the colonialists who try to distort the image of Islam.

Discussing the recent government decision to raise the salaries of civil servants and the Armed Forces personnel, Ahmad Dabbas, a columnist in Sawt Al Shaab, said that it is hoped the government would now take appropriate measures to prevent any rise in the prices of various commodities. The raise in salary was vital to improve the living conditions of employees but this raise should not be swallowed up by increases in prices, he said.

Only one suspect loose, FBI says

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Kasi surrendered for questioning Wednesday night. He appeared in court Thursday afternoon and entered no plea to charges of aiding and abetting the bombing. He was ordered held for a bail hearing Tuesday.

An FBI complaint linked Mr. Kasi to Mr. Ayyad, and said a search at Mr. Ayyad's home turned up a time delay firing device for explosives, "consistent with timing mechanisms used in other terrorist bombs."

But James Fox, head of the FBI's New York office, said there was no indication the bombing was the start of a "terrorist" campaign.

Court papers said Mr. Kasi also had an American Express card listing Mr. Ayyad's address, and that Mr. Kasi was seen in the area of a Jersey City street used to hold bomb ingredients.

Mr. Kasi shared a Jersey City apartment with suspect Mohammad Salameh shortly before the blast, said an investigator who spoke on condition of anonymity. Mr. Salameh allegedly rented the van used to carry the bomb into a parking garage beneath the trade centre.

The investigator said Mr. Kasi, who worked as a salesman for an import company, also shared bank accounts with both Mr. Salameh and Mr. Ayyad. Mr. Esposito of the FBI in New Jersey said Mr. Kasi attended services at a Brooklyn mosque where Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman preached. Other suspects in the bombing have similar links to Sheikh Abdul Rahman, who is suspected of fostering extremism in his native Egypt and is fighting deportation from the United States.

Hours before Mr. Kasi's arrest, another suspect, Mahmoud Abu Halima, was flown in from Egypt. He fled the United States within days of Mr. Salameh's arrest, the investigator said, authorities allege that he organised the bombing.

Mr. Abu Halima's brother,



An artist's drawing shows Mahmoud Abu Halima (second from left) appearing before a federal judge

Thursday, Mr. Abu Halima let his attorneys plead his innocence before the judge (AFP photo)

Mohammad, said he had alerted the FBI to Mahmoud's whereabouts.

"Why not?" Mohammad Abu Halima asked while standing outside the courtroom where his brother pleaded innocent. "I do not hide it. He did not have any relationship with these people."

The FBI's Fox said Mr. Abu Halima was examined by a doctor Wednesday night. Mr. Fox released no details.

The one paragraph indictment of Mr. Abu Halima, read in court, provided no details on a possible motive for the blast.

In Washington, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said it was unclear if a foreign government or "international terrorists" were responsible. "I think it's too early to say that," he said.

The Egyptian government said Thursday Mr. Abu Halima returned to the United States voluntarily although he denied any role in the blast.

The Interior Ministry's statement that Mr. Abu Halima was not forced to leave Wednesday appeared aimed at deflecting charges by Muslim fundamentalists that Egypt's government was being subservient to the West.

There are fears of increased extremist violence because of the

charges against Mr. Abu Halima. Mr. Abu Halima left Egypt in the custody of U.S. agents Wednesday, about five days after he was arrested by Egyptian police in his hometown in the Nile Delta town of Kafr Al Diwar.

In the first official comment on the case, the Interior Ministry said U.S. investigators showed Egyptian authorities evidence of Mr. Abu Halima's involvement in the Feb. 26 blast.

Mr. Abu Halima also was confronted with the evidence. "When faced with this, he denied any role in the incident," it said. "He insisted on his innocence in front of American investigators, who had gathered this evidence."

But the suspect agreed to return to the United States, the statement said.

Mr. Abu Halima, 33, entered Egypt on a German passport that he obtained after marrying a German woman. The government said he emigrated to Germany in 1980 and used his German passport to travel to the United States, where he was given a permanent residency permit. U.S. records show his nationality as Egyptian.

unit and is believed to have been on a team that overpowered hijackers on a Sabena airliner in Tel Aviv in 1972.

The campaign was the first vote among Likud's general membership for party leader.

It was bitter and bruising, with Mr. Netanyahu publicly confessing to adultery in order, he said, to head off a blackmail attempt against his wife by people close to a Likud rival.

This was interpreted to be David Levy, a former foreign minister, who came in second with 26.3 per cent. Mr. Levy rejected the charges, calling Mr. Netanyahu an "evil."

In third place was Benjamin Begin, the ascetic son of the late premier Menachem Begin, with 15.1 per cent. Moshe Katsav, a former transport minister, came

fourth with 6.5 per cent, according to overseas judge Hanna Even-Or who said 68 per cent of the Likud's 216,000 registered members voted.

Mr. Netanyahu called on the other candidates "to put the differences aside. What is behind us is much less important than what lies ahead."

Weizman elected president Ezer Weizman, a former general turned dove, was elected Wednesday as Israel's seventh president.

Mr. Weizman, the candidate of the ruling Labour Party, outpolled former parliament Speaker Dov Shilansky from Likud 66-53 in a secret parliament ballot. There was one abstention.

He will succeed President Chaim Herzog, who has served two five-year terms. The changeover is May 13. Congratulating Mr. Weizman

Bid to impeach Yeltsin sputters

(Continued from page 1)

sion: To put to a nationwide vote April 25 not only the question on confidence in the president but also on confidence in the congress," Mr. Yeltsin said to weak applause.

The constitutional crisis, Mr. Yeltsin said, was aggravated by the economic hardships caused in great part by the radical reforms he began last year.

Mr. Yeltsin told lawmakers: "The economy remains the number one problem today."

"It must be acknowledged that the economic crisis was aggravated by our mistakes: Insufficient social orientation of the reforms, inadequate support by the state of new forms of management and of the new strata of owners in the production sphere, absence of an efficient, anti-inflation policy and excessive reliance on foreign aid," Mr. Yeltsin said.

Mr. Yeltsin shared the blame with the central bank, which he has accused of fueling inflation by granting huge credits to insolvent state-owned industries.

The uncontrolled policy of the central bank contributed heavily to spinning the fly wheel of inflation. As a result the life of the majority of the Russian people has worsened," he said, drawing jeers from the hall.

Mr. Zorkin had been expected to present the court's finding that Mr. Yeltsin had violated the constitution by trying to override the legislature with his speech Saturday night. At that time — before Mr. Yeltsin's milder decree was published on Wednesday — Mr. Zorkin had said Mr. Yeltsin had acted illegally.

However, in his speech to lawmakers Friday, Mr. Zorkin glossed over any constitutional violations and instead offered the compromise.

The congress, dominated by ex-communist apparatchiks and factory directors opposed to Mr. Yeltsin's economic and political reforms, has been stripping the president of his executive powers for months. The lawmakers say Russia's Soviet-era constitution gives them supreme authority.

Mr. Khasbulatov had opened the congress with a slap at the president for trying to "trample the constitution."

"Unfortunately, we have come across an extraordinary circumstance: A desire to monopolize all power — legislative and executive — in one branch," Mr. Khasbulatov said, without mentioning Mr. Yeltsin by name.

But he also did not call for Mr. Yeltsin's impeachment. On Thursday night, he said he was against such a move.

Mr. Khasbulatov also is against the April 25 referendum and instead wants early presidential and legislative elections.

"The best form of a referendum is an election," Mr. Khasbulatov said in a nationally televised interview Thursday. "Let's agree on a date for electing a new president. Let's agree on a date for electing a new parliament."

Legislative elections now are set for March 1995 and presidential voting for June 1996.

Mr. Yeltsin in the past has suggested advancing each date by one year. But he insists simultaneous balloting would create a dangerous power vacuum and demands legislative elections first.

Yeltsin, meanwhile, signed a decree Friday that replaced Finance Minister Vasily Baranov with reformist Deputy Prime Minister, Boris Fyodorov, according to the ITAR-TASS news agency.

Mr. Fyodorov has been formulating economic policy since the congress in December forced Mr. Yeltsin to replace his reformist acting prime minister, Yegor Gaidar, with communist era bureaucrat Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Economics Minister Andrei Neebayev, another target of hardliners, was removed, along with Deputy Prime Minister, Boris Saltykov. Deputy Premier Alexander Shokhin said Mr. Yeltsin was ready to accept other new members to the cabinet provided they did not undermine reforms.

minister in the Likud government of Begin in 1977 and played a key role in peace talks with Egypt that produced Israel's only accord with an Arab state.

Mr. Weizman quit as defence minister in 1980, in part because he felt the government was not doing enough to make peace with other Arab states and the Palestinians. He later switched from Likud to Labour.

During the five-year Palestinian uprising, Mr. Weizman became an advocate for negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

He retired from parliament in February 1992, saying he was done with politics.

In congratulating Mr. Weizman, Prime Minister Rabin said he hoped the new president would help "ease differences" among Israelis and unite them behind the U.S.-backed peace negotiations.



Supporters of Russian President Boris Yeltsin Friday demonstrate near the Kremlin (AFP photo)

Netanyahu elected Likud leader

(Continued from page 1)

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Exiles split again on faction lines

(Continued from page 1)

over how to mark Jerusalem Day, an Iranian-sponsored holiday designed to express solidarity with the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Islamic Jihad's followers marked the occasion with a demonstration during which Israeli and American flags were burned in the camp.

The rest of the exiles, who belong to Hamas and who make up the overwhelming majority of the exiles, boycotted the protest, claiming the agitation did not serve their plight.

Ahmad Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) dispatched its top lieutenant, Fadi Shurro, to the camp through a mountain trail Monday night.

The next day, which marked the beginning of the Eid al Fitr feast, Mr. Shurro announced the reconquest of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Middle East peace talks were stalled by the Dec. 17 expulsion and Israel's refusal to implement U.N. Security Council Resolution 799, which demands the immediate return of the expellees.

A Palestinian delegation was to meet U.S. Secretary of State

Warren Christopher in Washington Friday to discuss the expellee crisis and resuming the Arab-Israeli negotiations.

The Palestinian team said any resumption, scheduled for April 20, hinged on the outcome of the talks in Washington.

But both Dr. Rantisi and Sheikh Shami agreed the meeting would help reach "an acceptable solution that would enable the Palestinian side to return to the talks."

In Tunis, Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat said Friday he hopes the talks: the Palestinian team will hold with Mr. Christopher would revive the Arab-Israeli peace talks.

"We are attached to the peace process and we hope the U.S. administration and peace-lovers in Israel would remove the obstacles to the process," Mr. Arafat said.

"I sincerely hope that our Palestinian delegation will find the responses which will push forward the peace process," he told the Palestinian news agency Wafa.

The United States and Russia, co-sponsors of the peace process, have invited Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinians and Israel to resume their talks in Washington on April 20.

Israel has accepted the offer. The Arabs will decide whether to go to Washington during a meeting in Damascus Sunday which Dr. Abdul Shafi will attend.

"We hope there will be a unified Arab stance but will not abandon our position regarding the resumption," Dr. Abdul Shafi said. "If there is a conviction by the other Arab parties to go to the talks, let them go. We will not object."

Palestinians demand Israeli pledge

(Continued from page 1)

meeting later Friday between U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and a Palestinian team led by Faisal Al-Husseini. Dr. Shafi was not attending the Washington meeting.

He said he hoped the meeting would help reach "an acceptable solution that would enable the Palestinian side to return to the talks."

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U.N. team seeks Iraqi assurances (Continued from page 1)

provide comprehensive information about arsenals, including the network of suppliers that had helped develop its secret nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programme.

It also is resisting a Security Council demand for establishing

along-term monitoring plan to ensure Iraq does not try to revive any of the non-conventional weapons programmes, including production of ballistic missiles.

The first team to launch a monitoring operation in Iraq returned to Bahrain last weekend

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DAVIS CUP

Jordan, Malaysia draw 1-1 on first day

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan and Malaysia Friday drew 1-1 on the first day of their Asia/Oceania Zone Group 2 Davis Cup playoff, held at the Jordan Tennis Federation (JTF) courts at Al Hussein Youth City.

Jordan won the opening match in which the Kingdom's top-ranked Hani Al Ali overcame Terrence Chia 5-7, 6-3, 6-2, 7-5. In the following match Malaysia's Ramaya Ramachandran took total command of the tiebreaker and won it 7-0, to seal the first set 7-6.

For the Jordanian team, the results of Friday's matches came as a relief after the team's disappointing 5-0 loss to Iran in the first round of competition in February.

Although Jordan has a 0-2 record against Malaysia (Malaysia won 5-0 in 1990 and 4-1 in 1992) players and officials have put up a big effort in preparation for the matches, as the winner of the playoff will secure a place in the Group 2 while the loser will be relegated to Group 3 in 1994.

In the first match, Jordan's Ali seemed determined to secure a win. After Chia won the first set 7-5, Ali came back by winning the second and third sets 6-3, 6-2.

As the crowd of just over 100 tennis fans cheered and roared with every point, Ali came back from 2-4 down to win the seventh game and then broke Chia's serve to tie 4-4. Both players then lost serve as the deciding set was leveled at 5-5.

Ali, who was enormously encouraged by his teammates and coach won the next two games and secured Jordan's first win.

The referee of the 2 hour 47 minute match, was Jordan's

only International Tennis Federation (ITF) White Badge referee Abbas Abu Awad.

In the second match Malaysia's Ramachandran took an early 3-1 lead. He held on to a 4-2 lead. However Abu Hamda came back to win the coming three games and took the lead at 5-4.

As Ramachandran served, Abu Hamda led 40-15 and could have sealed the set. However his opponent managed to hold serve and tied at 5-5.

Ahu Hamda won the next game 6-5 but could not clinch the set as the Malaysian held serve, forcing a tiebreaker. Ramachandran took total command of the tiebreaker and won it 7-0, to seal the first set 7-6.

The second set got off to a slower pace as both players secured their serve. However, that changed after the seventh game when Abu Hamda took a 4-3 lead. Ramachandran seemed to be determined not to let the set slip away as he convincingly won the next three games to clinch the set 6-4.

Abu Hamda's task became more difficult yet his resolve did not falter. He took a 3-1 and then a 4-2 lead as he seemed on his way to winning the set. However the same scenario of the first set seemed to repeat itself.

Ramachandran won the next two games to tie at 4-4. Abu Hamda broke serve to lead 5-4 and was leading 40-30 serving for the set but again lost serve as his opponent tied 5-5.

In the 11th game Abu Hamda was again leading 40-30, but Ramachandran managed to win the game after holding him to deuce 5 times to lead 6-5.

Abu Hamda held serve to force the second tiebreaker of the match which he lost 7-1 conceding the set 7-6 and the match to Ramachandran.



Hani Al Ali

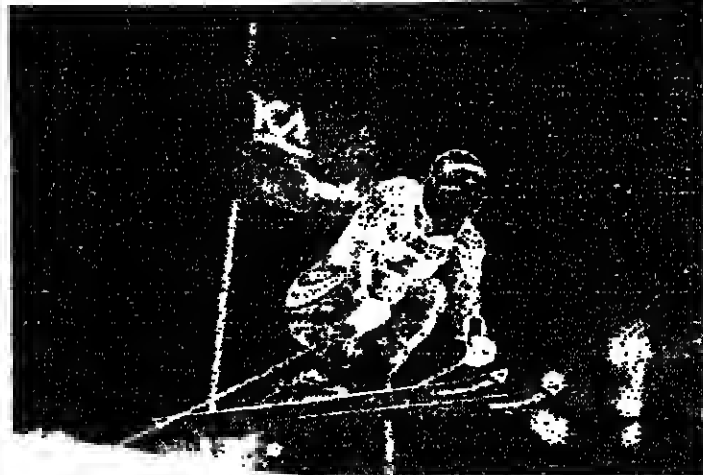
In a post match statement to the Jordan Times, Ramachandran praised his opponent's game. "I've played Imad before (in Malaysia in 1992) and his game has improved tremendously. Anyone could have won today. He just didn't take advantage of the chances he had."

Jordan's No. 1, Ali, seemed pleased not only by the results of the first day but the fact that the players "were enjoying a team spirit they had never had before."

"After the matches against Iran it became apparent that

we should concentrate on physical fitness, because the five-set matches of the Davis Cup demand that," said Ali, adding: "However the best thing about the competition this time is that we have all overcome the shortcomings of the past, and everyone is cooperating. The team spirit is there. It's the best Davis Cup atmosphere I've seen, and I think that's more important than the results."

The opening ceremony and the doubles match will be held Saturday at 2 p.m. at the JTF courts.



Norway's Kjetil Andre Aamodt flies past a gate as he speeds to win the men's World Cup Super G (AFP photo)

Aamodt wins Super G title

ARE, Sweden (AP) — Streaking Kjetil Andre Aamodt of Norway clinched the World Cup Super Giant Slalom title Friday by winning the finale by six hundredths of a second for his third consecutive victory in the discipline.

The 21-year-old Olympic champion also prevented Marc Girardelli from clinching the overall title for a record fifth time.

Girardelli, an native Austrian who skies for Luxembourg, only managed 15th but retained his lead in the overall standings. He earned 16 points and leads Aamodt 1,319, 1,167 with two races left. Each victory is worth 100 points.

Aamodt has closed on Girardelli in each of the three last races, but he knows that his task of capturing the overall crown is still formidable.

"I don't want to speculate on that," Aamodt said. "I should think about myself. I will try for

the GS title tomorrow. If I win that one too I'd be very happy with my season."

Aamodt, who won the last two Super G races at Aspen, Colorado and Lillehammer, Norway, completed the 1,001 metre Olympia Course in one minute, 7.43 seconds.

It was the third consecutive World Cup victory for Aamodt, who won a Super G in Lillehammer Sunday and a giant slalom Tuesday at Oppdal, Norway.

"It's exciting to win race after race," Aamodt said. "But it was difficult today. It was close, only six hundredths."

"I was a bit nervous. I didn't want to ski out. Maybe I should have skied more aggressively, but it was enough. I didn't make any big mistakes."

For Aamodt, who finished only 13th overall last year, it was the first World Cup title in any discipline.

SPORTS NEWS IN BRIEF

Boitano to ask for reinstatement at 1994 Games

NEW YORK (AP) — Brian Boitano, the 1988 Olympic figure skating champion, will announce Monday that he wants to compete at the 1994 Winter Games in Lillehammer, Norway. He must first have his eligibility restored by the International Skating Union. Boitano has said for nearly a year that he plans to return to competition and be back until April 1 to do so. If his application is accepted — a mere formality — Boitano will join 1992 Olympic champion Viktor Petrenko of Ukraine, who also intends to seek reinstatement next week, and Kurt Browning of Canada, a four time world champion, as favorites at Lillehammer.

Skah resumes hostilities with Kenyans

LONDON (R) — Moroccan Khaled Skah, who has just repaired a rift with his national federation, resumes hostilities with the Kenyans at the World Cross-Country Championships in Amorebieta, Spain Sunday. The volatile Skah, winner in 1990 and 1991, has been to dispute with the Moroccan Federation, accusing them of failing to pay a promised bonus after landing the Olympic 10,000 metres title in Barcelona last year. After threatening to boycott the championships Skah has made peace with the authorities, returning to Morocco to train with the rest of the team near Rabat after wintering in the French Pyrenees.

Cooper outpoints in 10 round bout

ATLANTIC CITY (AP) — Heavyweight Bert Cooper of the United States labored to a 10 round unanimous decision over Derek Williams Thursday night. Cooper, rebounding from an upset loss to former heavyweight champion Mike Weaver in China Feb. 27, forced an inside fight against the 20-year-old Williams, who enjoyed about a six inch reach advantage. Cooper's left hooks and overhand rights to the head enabled him to take control from the third round on.

Davis Cup champions lose 2-0

MELBOURNE (R) — Davis Cup champions the United States were on the rack Friday as old rivals Australia took a commanding 2-0 lead on day one of their first round tie.

Australia's top-ranked player Mark Woodforde and veteran Wally Masur took full advantage of the below-strength American team, both winning in four sets on grass at Kooyong to set up the chance of outright victory in Saturday's doubles.

The left-handed Woodforde, recalled to Australia's team after three years in the wilderness, fought back from one set down to beat David Wheaton 3-6 7-6 6-4 6-4.

It was the 27-year-old Woodforde's first victory over Wheaton in three meetings and confirmed captain Neale Fraser's faith in recalling him after four previous defeats in the cup.

Though Wheaton served 19 aces, he double-faulted twice in the second set tie break and then gave Woodforde the first and vital service break in the ninth game of the fourth set.

Earlier Masur had given the home team a great start by beat-

ing veteran Brad Gilbert, the only American with previous Davis Cup experience, 6-3 6-7 6-4 6-2 in just over three hours.

The Americans, who woo the cup amid great celebration by beating Switzerland last December, now pin their hopes on the country's top doubles pair, Jim Grabb and Richey Reneberg.

Grabb and Reneberg meet the in-form Woodforde and long-standing partner Todd Woodbridge, who won the World Doubles Championships in Johannesburg late last year, their eighth title in 1992.

The Americans have been beaten by the Australian pair in three of five matches played but they did win on grass in five sets in the semifinals at Wimbledon last year.

The Americans will also have in battle cup history which shows that only three nations in the World Group have come back to win from a 2-0 deficit.

Woodforde, currently ranked 21st in the world and playing the best tennis of his career, was ecstatic after his victory over Wheaton who had seemed on course to level the tie when he

swept through the first set 6-3. "It feels pretty damn good, it's been a long time (since the last cup appearance) and I'm as happy as a cat because I came in with such good form," Woodforde told reporters.

"Hopefully we'll kick them when they are still down," he said of the doubles, noting that Grabb and Reneberg had not played Davis Cup before.

Woodforde, 27, who won the U.S. Indoors Championships in February and last week beat world number one Jim Courier, said Wheaton's confidence was obviously low after recent poor results.

"I started off poorly probably through nerves ... I knew if I could just stick with him, he would just go down."

Like Masur in the earlier match, Woodforde came alive with some superb serving and passing shots in the third and fourth sets after taking the second set tiebreak at 7-1 which proved to be the turning point.

He got the best possible start in the third set breaking Wheaton's opening serve and bolding his own to take it 6-4.

The fourth set went to service until the ninth game when a disastrous double fault by Wheaton at game Woodforde service for the match.

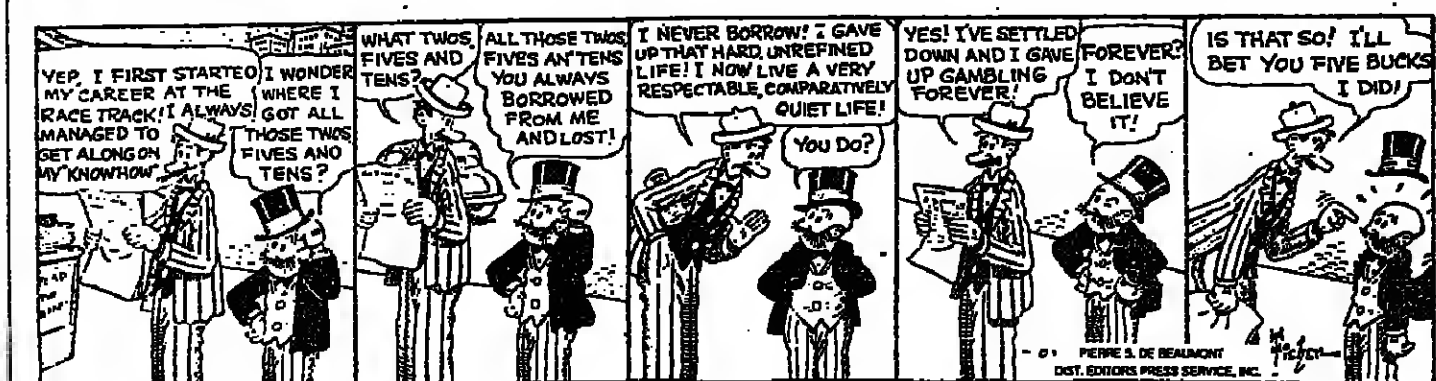
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY MARCH 27, 1993

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Analyzing assets and liabilities accurately is wise at this time so that you know just what your true position may be. If additional information is required, go to an expert in your field.

whatever will improve your property so do that in the morning, then you can study new ways to have an abundance later.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A special morning to go after what you want with courage and confidence after which you can get into the practical factors to make desires actually yours.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You can make a secret campaign that appeals to you in the morning to gain future success while later you find you can bring this plan into the open.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Those who have it in their power to aid you gain personal aims will support you if asked in the morning, then do your part of the task in the evening.

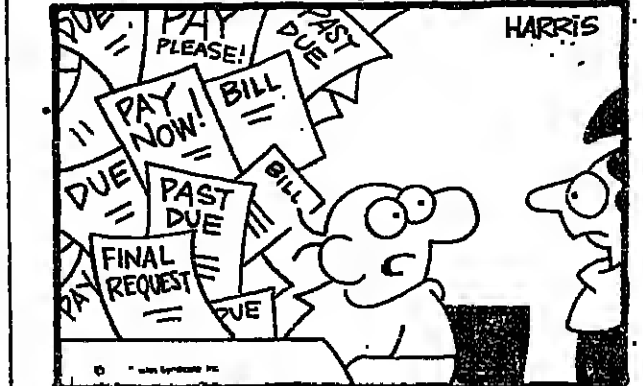
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Go straight to the most influential person you know to get an outlet for your abilities and later personal aims are easy to also obtain.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A charming and cooperative person from afar brings excellent suggestions for your development after which take them for approval to an expert.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You would be wise to find out this morning just what your attachment expects of you and then later be off to those persons who can expand your understanding.

THE BETTER HALF

By Harris



"Does garlic work on bill collectors or just vampires?"

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

GORRI

GULAH

AVGASE

YATCCH



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

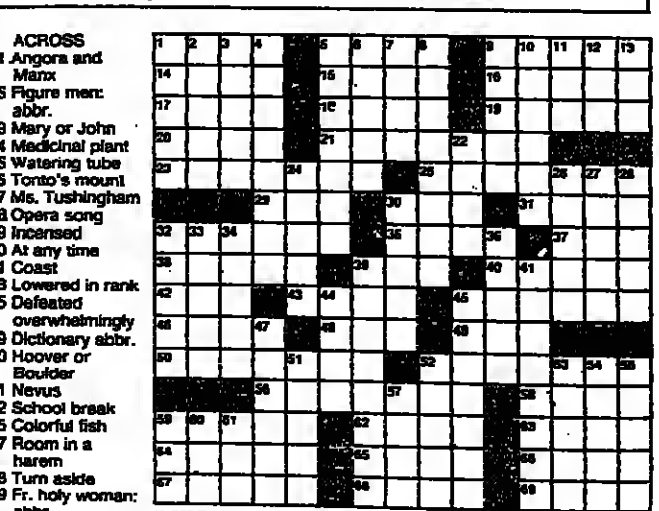
Print answer here: _____

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: DODLY APRON SEKTON ATTAIN

Answer: What the coffee tycoon was at the annual banquet — "ROASTED"

THE Daily Crossword by Fran Ragus



Yesterday's Puzzle Solved:

1 Across: 1. Anger and Manx
2 Down: 2. Figure merit
3 Across: 3. May or John
4 Down: 4. Medicinal plant
5 Across: 5. Watering tube
6 Down: 6. Toronto's mount
7 Across: 7. Ms. Tushingham
8 Down: 8. Opera song
9 Across: 9. Increased
10 Down: 10. At any time
11 Across: 11. Coast
12 Down: 12. Lowered in rank
13 Across: 13. Deflated
14 Down: 14. Overwhelmingly
15 Across: 15. Dictionary abbr.
16 Down: 16. Hoover or Boulder
17 Across: 17. Nevus
18 Down: 18. School break
19 Across: 19. Colorful fish
20 Down: 20. Room in a harem
21 Across: 21. Turn aside
22 Down: 22. Jolly woman: abbr.
23 Across: 23. City on the Ruhr
24 Down: 24. Author Burdette
25 Across: 25. Sword
26 Down: 26. Dative
27 Across: 27. Expressions
28 Down: 28. Turkey
29 Across: 29. Stripping
30 Down: 30. Notable period
31 Across: 31. Progress
32 Down: 32. The sun
33 Across: 33. Shipping harbor
34 Down: 34. English
35 Across: 35. First public appearance
36 Down: 36. Saw
37 Across: 37. Fairy tale villain
38 Down: 38. Stand
39 Across: 39. When
40 Down: 40. Line of length
41 Across: 41. Ancient
42 Down: 42. Phoenix city
43 Across: 43. Sea birds
44 Down: 44. 1 was sympathetic
45 Across: 45. 2 Advice
46 Down: 46. 3 Clean emblem
47 Across: 47. 4 Prate
48 Down: 48. 5 Certain drinks
49 Across: 49. 6 — over (studied)
50 Down: 50. 7 Where China is
51 Across: 51. 8 Type of painting
52 Down: 52. 9 Stage whisper
53 Across: 53. 10 Holler
54 Down: 54. 11 — man (unusually)
55 Across: 55. 12 Map abbr.
56 Down: 56. 13 "My Friend"
57 Across: 57. 14 Savior
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Economy

Japanese household savings grow despite recession

TOKYO (AP) — Despite tough economic times, Japanese savings grew last year, with the average household's nest egg reaching 15.4 million yen (\$132,000), according to government figures.

The figures uphold Japanese households' longstanding reputation for frugality. Japanese money saving habits are often held up as an example to Americans, whose rate of savings tends to be low.

But savings grew at a slower rate last year, reflecting the erosion of income growth during the economic slump, said the Statistics Bureau of the prime minister's office. Average savings per household at the end of 1992 were up 4.9 per cent from a year earlier, compared to a 7.6 per cent increase in 1991.

Among non-wage earning families, including independent business owners and senior citizens, average savings rose 4.3 per cent to 21.25 million yen (\$180,000). Average savings by wage earners and their families rose 5.2 per cent to 11.87 million yen (\$100,900).

Among wage earners, time deposits were the most popular form of savings, with a 46 per cent share, followed by 19 per cent in life insurance and 13 per cent in securities.

The share of savings going to securities was the lowest since the agency began keeping records more than three decades ago, in 1959. Investors apparently were more worried by weak stock prices than by low interest rates on time deposits, the report said.

In 1989, the share of savings put into securities peaked at 23 per cent.

The bureau compiled data from about 6,100 households nationwide.

Iran extends \$30m credit to Ukraine for oil purchases

KIEV (R) — Iran has extended a \$30 million credit to Ukraine for oil imports to help the former Soviet republic end its dependence on Russian energy, the country's deputy foreign minister has said.

"Iran is giving Ukraine this credit to help implement existing contracts for Iranian oil exports," Mahmoud Vaezi told a news conference.

He said a major Iranian bank would soon open branch in Kiev specially to facilitate oil purchases.

Ukraine is in the throes of an energy crisis 15 months after independence from the Soviet Union. Shortages of petrol have become so acute that sales to individuals have been banned for the entire month of March.

Under a contract concluded last month, Iran is to ship to Ukraine four million tonnes of oil this year.

The same agreement provided for long-term construction of a gas pipeline from Iran to Ukraine through Azerbaijan and Russia, but authorities in Moscow have so far failed to give their formal consent.

Deliveries have been hampered by the absence of a pipeline connecting the two countries and inadequate facilities in Ukraine to accommodate big tankers.

The first Iranian tanker carrying 60,000 tonnes of oil is expected later this month in Odessa.

Ukrainian authorities plan to build up a 40-vessel tanker fleet. Deputy Prime Minister Yuli Yofe has said the first of several new terminals at the Black Sea port, capable of handling 12 million tonnes, would be completed by 1994.

Ukraine has agreed to provide Iran with sugar, grain and metal. Ukrainian newspapers have speculated that the former Soviet republic would also sell arms to Tehran.

U.S. banks posted record profit in '92

WASHINGTON (R) — Profits at U.S. banks nearly tripled in the last quarter of 1992, government regulators have said, enabling the industry to chalk up its best year ever as rates paid to depositors fell.

America's 11,461 commercial banks earned \$82.2 billion last quarter, up from \$3.0 billion in the final 1991 quarter, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. (FDIC) said in a report likely to

calm lingering fears of a savings and loan-type bailout for banks.

For the year, bank profits surged 80 per cent, to a record \$32.2 billion from \$17.9 billion in 1991, aided by the need to set aside less money as a cushion for problem loans.

They were the highest annual profits since \$24.8 billion in 1988, and the FDIC now is gearing up to cut its estimates for likely bank failures in 1993.

Big banks in the northeast and the west, which have suffered from souring loans, especially in depressed real estate markets, showed the biggest earnings gains.

The FDIC said profits were boosted by the spread favourable to banks between the interest rates they earned on loans and other assets, and the rates they paid to depositors.

That gap widened throughout

1992 to historic levels as interest rates tumbled, forcing down yields on deposits. Rates charged by banks for loans, by comparison, fell less sharply.

FDIC officials also said depositors were moving out of longer maturing certificates of deposit into short-term instruments such as money market accounts that yield less but offer consumers more flexibility to move funds around.

Balladur wants balanced world trade deal

PARIS (R) — Conservative leader Edouard Balladur, striking a less aggressive stance than the head of his Gaullist party, said Friday that France must seek a balanced world trade pact covering more than just agriculture.

Mr. Balladur, a leading candidate to head a centre-right government set to take power next week, said the success of world trade talks under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was crucial for French and European economies.

"Agriculture is important of course but industrial activities — textiles, services — are also important," Mr. Balladur told RTL radio.

"What is at stake is the construction of an international economy based on fair and balanced trade," he said. "What we Europeans are asking is not to be subjected to tougher rules than those for the Americans or Japanese. That is fair. We must defend that point of view."

The tone of his comments contrasted with recent remarks by Jacques Chirac, head of the Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) party which leads the centre-right coalition that scored an overwhelming victory in the first round of general elections last Sunday.

Mr. Chirac, a contender for the presidency in 1995, has threatened to spark an EC crisis over a farm trade accord reached between Brussels and Washington, which he considers "shameful".

S. Korea's foreign exchange holdings increase

SEOUL (AP) — Helped by a government drive to curb imports, South Korea's foreign exchange holdings rose by 25 per cent to \$17.15 billion last year.

As a result of the anti-import campaign, the current account deficit was cut by nearly half to \$4.6 billion last year from \$8.73 billion in 1991, the central bank said.

In 1992, South Korea suffered a trade deficit of \$2.2 billion, down from \$6.90 billion a year ago.

Last year's exports rose 6.6 per cent to \$76.6 billion, while imports increased a mere 0.3 per cent to \$81.70 billion, the lowest gain in 10 years.

South Korea launched a tight economic policy beginning in 1990, when it suffered a current account shortfall of \$2.2 billion from a surplus of \$5.1 billion the previous year.

The government's efforts to curb inflation and slash deficits have caused high unemployment, business failures and a slowdown in exports and domestic sales.

In 1992, South Korean exports to the United States, Japan and Europe were sluggish, but shipments to developing countries increased.

The bank said exports to the United States, South Korea's largest overseas market, dropped 2.5 per cent last year to \$10 billion. But its surplus with South East Asian nations widened to \$7.96 billion from \$5.46 billion.



Abdul Aziz Al Zamel

SABIC continues slide in profits

MANAMA (R) — Saudi Arabia's industrial conglomerate SABIC has reported a decline in profits for the fourth straight year, blaming it on unfavourable market conditions.

A statement from SABIC, the Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Corp., said net profit dropped 14 per cent to 1.96 billion riyals (\$523 million) in 1992 from 2.30 billion (\$612 million) in 1991.

Its net has declined each year from a record 3.68 billion riyals (\$981 million) in 1988.

SABIC Chairman Abdul Aziz Abdullah Al Zamel blamed it on "the continued drop in the prices of petrochemical products internationally, a surplus in energy and imbalance between supply and demand," the official Saudi Press Agency said.

SABIC controls and operates 15 joint venture complexes with Western and Japanese companies, built to diversify away from dependence on raw oil and gas exports.

Using the kingdom's natural gas reserves as feedstock and fuel, they produce mainly petrochemicals and chemical products such as plastics and fertiliser, as well as steel.

The annual dividend remains unchanged at one billion riyals (\$266.7 million). The Saudi government, the world's largest oil exporter, owns 70 per cent and private investors hold the rest of the shares, traded in the Saudi stock market.

Total sales revenue rose about 45 per cent to 13 billion riyals (\$3.5 billion) from nine billion riyals (\$2.4 billion) — and that reinforced SABIC's long-term business goals, said Sheikh Zamel, who is also industry and electricity minister.

Output rose 19.3 per cent to 15.7 million tonnes from 13.1 million. Exports to 75 countries rose by 23.9 per cent to 12.5 million tonnes.

Danish media: KLM, Swissair, Austrian and SAS to merge

COPENHAGEN (R) — Scandinavian Airlines, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Swissair and Austrian Airlines plan a full four-airline merger, two Danish newspapers reported Friday.

The Boersen financial daily and national daily Jyllands-Posten said they had obtained documents showing the four carriers were in agreement on the time plan and the principles for a merger.

Cooperation would begin next January and after a transition phase the new airline would operate with joint logo, colours and route network.

The four airlines said earlier this month they were deepening a study on a four-way link by setting up working groups to discuss the options, but declined to elaborate.

The Danish newspaper reports said the four airlines planned to transfer their assets to a new company in which Austrian Airlines would own 10 per cent and the others would have 30 per cent each.

The SAS board had given its approval of a preliminary plan, they said.

But Danish Transport Minister Helge Mortensen denied that the SAS board had given the green light for a merger. "There are many plans. We are only in an initial phase and SAS management

is keeping the Scandinavian governments informed," he said.

Mr. Mortensen stressed that the approval of the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian governments, which together own half of SAS, is required before concrete negotiations on a merger or other forms of cooperation can start.

"Nothing has been presented to us," he said.

Mr. Mortensen said he believed the result of the talks would be a joint venture between the four carriers rather than a merger.

SAS management was expected to present a basis for negotiations in May at the earliest, he said.

The merger model reported by Danish media is similar to the structure of SAS itself, in which Sweden has 40 per cent and Denmark and Norway have 30 per cent each.

It was not yet decided whether the headquarters of the new carrier would be in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Zurich or Vienna, the reports said.

A merger is seen to have broad support in Sweden and Norway. But the Danish government and the country's unions are critical because they fear it would mean shifting the hub for SAS intercontinental flights from Copenhagen to Amsterdam.

Nigerian fuel subsidy cut plan triggers unease

ABUJA (R) — OPEC-member Nigeria is pushing ahead with controversial plans for sizeable cuts in subsidies on domestic fuel prices despite fears of widespread unrest.

Some politicians say higher petrol prices, sought by foreign creditors to mend a battered economy, could trigger chaos capable of upsetting the army's delayed civil rule programme.

"We have no choice but to increase prices of our petroleum products by an appreciable figure," a member of the civilian transitional council, which runs daily government business for the military, has said.

"We hope it will not be a matter for the military or the police. We hope the goodwill of Nigerians will be brought to bear on any decision we take," the official added, referring to possible unrest.

Official sources said pump petrol prices of 0.70 naira (three U.S. cents) a litre might be raised to at least five naira (20 cents) initially only for private vehicles, in April or May and that further

hikes could follow.

Some of Nigeria's 60 civilian presidency hopefuls vying to succeed military President Ibrahim Babangida in August have urged him not to tamper with the subsidies now.

"I doubt if the (civilian rule) programme will go through if there is a big cut in the subsidy because the crisis that is going to come up will be so chaotic," candidate Sarah Jibril said.

Millions of Nigerians earning barely enough for food and transport regard access to some of the world's cheapest petrol, less than the cost of a bottle of water, as a right after a decade of austerity under army rule.

"The people are already hurting badly. Removal of the subsidy will also worsen corruption, prostitution and other ills," Ms. Jibril told Reuters.

Elected senators and others fear any unrest could inflame sectarian and ethnic passions, leaving General Babangida with an option to delay his handover to civilians for a fourth time since 1990.

UNCTAD: Poorest states worst off during recession

GENEVA (AP) — The world's poorest countries face dim prospects this year as wealthier countries concentrate on their own problems, a U.N. agency has said.

The 47 so-called "least developed countries" are expected to record the fourth straight year of economic decline in 1993, according to the annual report of the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

In 1991, the latest year for which final figures are available, output of the countries declined by 0.2 per cent, UNCTAD said. It said estimates indicate output may have broken even in 1992, but said it still was outstripped by population growth, meaning there was a per-capita decline.

The countries are suffering from a range of world problems and, because the cold war has ended, can't even try to play the superpowers off against each other for more aid, the report said.

At least 14 African nations faced food emergencies last year because of drought, with civil war compounding the problems of Somalia, Liberia, Mozambique and Ethiopia, it said.

UNCTAD urged international aid to be "brought speedily to the drought areas" to head off a large number of people adding to the world's refugee burden.

Only a handful of the countries have bucked the gloomy trend, it said, citing an increase in the value of exports from Burma, Malawi, Mauritania, Nepal and Uganda.

In Afghanistan, Djibouti and Haiti, however, the value of exports dropped by more than 10 per cent, it said.

Competition for aid increased as the world has mounted efforts to combat starvation in Somalia and other countries and as the West has sought to help the former Soviet Bloc change to a market economy, it said.

France is the largest donor to the least developed countries,

giving \$1.5 billion in 1991, followed by Germany \$1.1 billion, Japan \$999 million and the United States \$992 million, UNCTAD said.

According to the size of their economies, however, the most generous country was Norway, with its aid amounting to .34 per cent of its gross national product (GNP), the report said. Other countries whose giving exceeded .2 per cent of GNP were Denmark, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands and Portugal.

France's giving to the least developed was .16 per cent of GNP, compared with .1 per cent for Germany, .05 per cent for Japan and .03 per cent for the United States, UNCTAD said.

The worldwide recession has had a multiple impact on the least developed countries, it said. Wealthy nations not only have less to spend on aid but also buy fewer exports from the poorer countries.

A key source of income for many poor countries is from citizens who go abroad to work and send money home to their families, but unemployment in wealthier countries has "sharply reduced foreign exchange (earnings) from this source and in some cases brought them virtually to a halt," the report said.

Population is growing fast in the poorest countries than in the rest of the world, and attempts to control the growth depend on foreign aid, the UNCTAD report said. The 47 countries currently have a population exceeding 1.2 billion by the year 2025.

"More vigorous actions necessary," UNCTAD said. A reversal of the reforms could lead to collapse of societies, economies, damage to the environment, more hunger and increased flows of refugees, it said.

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Failure of nations to agree on a new global trade accord, alone more than two years behind schedule, has undermined the confidence of investors who might otherwise put capital in developing countries, it said.

Calls on the West to ease debt burden of the least developed countries have been ignored, UNCTAD said, warning that the lack of support could undermine attempts by a number of the countries to reform their economies.

The debt of the least developed countries stopped growing at around \$113 billion in 1991, but the burden hasn't proved since then as World Bank and other programmes provide inadequate aid, it said.

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